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AMERICAN CRISIS BIOGRAPHIES

WILLIAM H. SEWARD

by

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PREFACE

THE present life of Seward is chiefly a political biography; an account, to use his own words, of his own particular part in the transactions and events which occurred while he lived. It differs somewhat from its predecessors in that it devotes relatively more attention to Seward's career as a public man in the state of New York than has been usual. It has appeared to me that the history of the United States before the war will be made much more comprehensible by a more particular understanding of the men and issues of the separate states. The influence of New York politics is visible in Seward long after he became a national leader.

In following this course I have had to be somewhat irregular in method. The period of Seward's national activity, especially that of the Civil War, has been so extensively and intensively studied, that I have felt that I could depend upon certain well-known authorities. For the first half of his life, however, the events are often obscure and the accounts insufficient and conflicting. Even Seward's own Autobiography, written in his last years, needs to be critically examined where it concerns minor details. For this period, therefore, I have worked largely from original sources, partly manu-

script, but chiefly from official records and the newspapers of the time. In the latter portion, as in the earlier, I have tried to make use of any illustrative material that has appeared since the works of Mr. Frederick W. Seward, Mr. Lathrop, and Mr. Bancroft, which, I need not say, have been of much assistance to me.

The great mass of Seward manuscripts still available, I have thought it not necessary or even desirable again to go over: they have already been very carefully and thoroughly studied. I have used to good advantage the Van Buren manuscripts in the Congressional Library, though I have not been able by any means to give this material the attention it deserves. I have also had access to some smaller but still very valuable collections of Seward manuscripts, especially those of his letters to Thurlow Weed and to Mrs. George Schuyler, to whom he wrote very freely on political matters.

I would make most thankful acknowledgment to Mr. F. W. Richardson, president of the Cayuga Historical Society, and through him, to the Society for access to their collection of newspapers and manuscripts relating to Seward's early life; to Mr. Edward W. Paige, of Schenectady, for files of the Schenectady *Cabinet;* to the librarian of Union College for his kind assistance in using the considerable collection of early newspapers to be found there; to Miss Georgina Schuyler for the very valuable letters of Seward to her mother; to Mrs. George C. Hollister for access to the newspapers and letters originally belonging to Thurlow Weed; and to Mrs.

Maurice Perkins for letters exhibiting curiously the life at Union College while Seward was a student. Their help has been very great and I am only sorry that I have not been able to make a more particular use of it.

EDWARD E. HALE, JR.

Union College.

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CHRONOLOGY

1801—May 16th, born in Florida, Orange County, New York, the third son of Dr. Samuel S. Seward of that place. Was educated in the school at Florida and at the Farmers' Hall Academy, Goshen.

1816—September, enters the Sophomore class of Union College.

1819—January 1st, leaves college because of a disagreement with his father. Goes to Putnam County, Georgia, where he teaches for a while at the Union Academy. In the summer returns to his home.

1820—January, reëenters Union College, from which he graduates in July.

1820–1822—Studies law, at first with John Anthon in New York; then with Ogden Hoffman in Goshen. Is admitted to the bar at Utica, October, 1822.

1823—January 1st, settles in Auburn, New York, as law partner of Judge Elijah Miller.

1824—Acts politically with the friends of Adams and Clinton.

1824—October 20th, married to Miss Frances Miller.

1826—Continues to act with the friends of Adams and those of Clinton.

1827—October, nomination sent to the Senate as Surrogate of Cayuga County, but not confirmed.

1828—August, chairman of the Convention of Young Men favorable to the reëlection of Adams.

1829—On the defeat of Adams, joins the Anti-Masons; delegate to the Albany Convention, January.

1830—September, delegate to National Anti-Masonic Convention at Philadelphia. Elected state senator from the sixth district.

1831–1834—Serves in the state senate, as one of the small Anti-Masonic minority. In the summer of 1833 makes a trip abroad with his father. In the winter of 1833–1834, the Anti-Masonic party in the legislature is dissolved.

1834—April 8th–10th, charter election in New York City which shows unexpected strength of the Whig party. In the summer is nominated for governor on the Whig ticket, but not elected.

1834—Returns to Auburn and continues the practice of law.

1836—Becomes associated with Cary, Lay, and Schermerhorn in the adjustment of their land purchase from the Holland Land Company.

1837—Great increase of Whig strength following the panic; Whig majority in the Assembly.

1838—Nominated for the governorship on the Whig ticket and elected. The Whigs, however, not in complete control of the state government.

1839—The Whigs gain control of the state government: Seward advocates the party policy of internal improvement, and also, without regard to party, a public school policy.

1840—Reëlected governor, but with a reduced majority. Continues his public school policy and is involved in the Virginia search case, the McLeod case, and the Helderberg anti-rent war.

1842—At the close of his administration returns to Auburn and takes up his law practice.

1842–1846—Not active in politics, though "mentioned" for senator, governor, President. Defends Wyatt and Freeman. Turns his attention to patent cases.

1846—January, going to Washington on patent-law and anti-slavery cases, he comes more into touch with national politics.

1848—Takes the stump to support Taylor, against the Free-Soil party.

1849—February, elected United States senator.

1850—The Compromise: Seward stands as representative of the administration in the Senate; speech on California, March 11th; death of Taylor, July 9th.

1850—Separation of the Silver Grays at the New York state convention, on the issue of approving Seward's course.

1852—Active in procuring the nomination of Scott; Scott utterly defeated.

1854—January 4th, Douglas brings in the Nebraska Bill. Question of organizing the Republican party in New York; organization deemed inadvisable.

1855—February, reëlection as senator after a hard canvass, complicated by the Know-Nothing party. In the summer the Republican party in New York is organized.

1856—Does not present his name as Republican candidate for the presidency. Frémont nominated and defeated.

1858—October 25th, speech on "Irrepressible Conflict."

1859—May–December, trip abroad, during which occurs the John Brown raid.

1860—Candidate for Republican nomination; the convention, however, nominates Lincoln, May 18th. Seward accepts position of Secretary of State.

1860–1861—At Washington engaged in efforts to avert further secession of Southern states.

1861—Assumes duties of Secretary of State. Coöperates with the President in domestic matters. In foreign affairs deals with the recognition of belligerency of the Southern states by Great Britain and France, May; the case of Bunch, consul at Charleston; the unofficial envoys to England and France; the Trent Affair, November, December.

1862—The *Oreto;* first suggestion by Lincoln of emancipation, July 12th; the *Alabama* gets to sea, July 29th; Gladstone's Newcastle speech, October 7th, indicates British recognition of Confederacy.

1863—The *Alexandra;* Mr. Roebuck's attempt to force recognition; the Laird rams stopped September 8th; the Russian fleet in America.

1864—Maximilian accepts the throne of Mexico, April 10th.

1865—Hampton Roads Conference, February 3d; second term as secretary, March 4th; carriage accident, April 5th; attacked by assassin April 14th; retains position under Johnson.

1866—Supports Johnson in his Reconstruction policy.

1867—French troops finally evacuate Mexico.

1868—Signs Alaska treaty, March 30th.

1869—March 4th, concludes service as Secretary of State and returns to Auburn.

1869—June 7th to March 15th, 1870, trip to the West.

1870—August 9th to October 9th, 1871, trip around the world.

1872—October 10th, death.

WILLIAM H. SEWARD

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

THE family of Seward, in the early days of the state of New York, represented different branches of the British peoples. William H. Seward's grandfather, John Seward, was of Welsh, and his mother's father, Isaac Jennings, was of English descent. His mother's mother came of an Irish family, probably from the north of Ireland. He found, as he looked back in later years, no trace of Scotch ancestry.

William Henry Seward was born May 16, 1801, in Florida, then a little village of a dozen houses in the southern part of Orange County, some twenty miles from the Hudson and not far from the New Jersey boundary. He was thus, as many other great Americans have been, a country boy, but unlike many he always preferred a country life. Although it was never possible for him to reside in the actual country, yet in his devotion to Auburn, first a village and never a great city, we see that the complicated ways of New York, for instance, repelled rather than attracted him. Of his early years very little that is significant is told. His love

for nature, beginning and prevailing through life, was one reason why he was never willing to make his home in a large city. Perhaps he may not have spent much time in direct appreciation of the mountains and woods about him, but they were not without their effect, and years afterward he used to remember them, so that a mention of Mount Eve, for instance, would at once bring to mind the picture of the "forest-covered steep, with beautiful fleecy clouds gathering midway in the ascent, and with it [he goes on] is sure to come the recollection of the hundred times when I watched it, to see if there was cause to fear a storm might mar anticipated sport." These days must have had much of this unconscious education, not only from nature, but from other surroundings, as "the perplexing enigma" offered by slaves in his father's family, which determined him at an early age to be an Abolitionist.[1] But that life is passed away and lost now, save as we may make our inference from the scattered mention of after years, or note the few recollections of his own, as of the deep-instilled feeling during the War of 1812 of the necessity of supporting the government in a foreign war.

His formal education was not remarkable, except perhaps in so far as it brought forcibly to mind his inability to speak in public. He tells us that he belonged to the debating society of the Goshen Academy, and profited by the debates but never

[1] This is his own expression (*Life*, Vol. I, p. 28), perhaps not carefully considered. He never became what was commonly called an Abolitionist.

took part in them. So it was with him constantly in early life: in the Adelphic Society at college where, though he did not remain silent, he found that he was unable to deliver effectively what was well written. So it was afterward in the New York "Forum," when he studied law, and so even in the Senate of the state of New York, when he first took the floor. It is a testimony to his determination and ability that in after years he was able to speak, if not with the eloquence of Webster and Clay, at least so as to command the closest attention and keenest interest.

In 1816 he was ready for college. His father, Dr. Samuel S. Seward, although a man of great ability, had had no training of this kind, for during his youthful days Columbia College had been disorganized by the war. But Seward himself was early chosen from the rest of the family for a college education, partly because he was less robust than his brothers and apparently less able to take care of himself, and partly because of a docile disposition and studious habits.[1] Union College was selected by his father on account of the great and growing reputation of its president. The boy was but fifteen when he appeared at Schenectady and was even for that age undersized, pale and delicate, with red hair and sandy complexion. He wore plain sheep's gray, homespun and home-made clothing.

Both Schenectady and Union College were very different from what they are now. Schenectady was still a little town, with its Tontine Coffee-House

[1] *Cayuga Co. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. VII, p. 27.

and its stage-coach; it still reckoned its time by "early candle-light," and gained preëminence over other towns by the accomplishments of its spinsters in spinning; its papers still advertised, as a matter of course, lottery tickets and negro men and women.[1] Of Union College at that day we would gladly know much more than we do. Seward, on the morning of his arrival, breakfasted at Givens' Tavern, walked up the hill to the college which had but two years before been moved from its earlier situation nearer the river, and offered himself for examination. The professor who conducted it, the Rev. Thomas McCauley, D. D., pronounced him able to enter the junior class, but as the proper age was sixteen, Seward was matriculated as a sophomore. This entering the higher classes was characteristic of Union College at that time and later. Under the presidency of Dr. Nott, students very commonly joined the upper classes: the old catalogues, printed as broadsides, give considerable numbers of seniors and juniors, fewer sophomores, and almost no freshmen at all.

Having already gone over some of the sophomore work, Seward found his studies fairly easy. He later expressed some criticism of the educational method; it consisted, without doubt, of the recitation in class of lessons previously prepared. The older rules of the college were particular in designating times not only for recitation, but for study and recreation, and these rigid rules were in general approved by Dr. Nott. As is often the way at such

[1] Schenectady *Cabinet*, 1816–1820 *passim*.

institutions, Seward profited not so much by the prescribed studies of the curriculum as by other intellectual voyages and adventures. Certainly the college and its president obtained a strong hold on his affections, but as he looked back over fifty years, he rather condemned the systematic education of that day. "There was a daily appointment of three tasks," he writes, "in as many different studies, which the pupils were required, unaided, to master in their rooms;—the young, the dull, and the backward, equally with the most mature and the most astute. The pupil understood that he performed his whole duty when he recited three daily lessons without failure." With immaterial changes, something of the sort is likely to be the case in an American college to-day, and the escape from it by which a student has offered him an election between studies very differently conducted is not much better for the average man. Seward read the classics with Francis Wayland, afterward President of Brown, and though the students seem to have carried on their work in rather schoolboy fashion, and though Seward himself was never a classical scholar, yet he read Latin and Greek readily through life, and that for pleasure. Mathematics he did not like but he probably got a good mathematical discipline. Blair's *Rhetoric* he also studied, and perhaps its rather formal conception of the art of writing had some effect on his style, which was doubtless otherwise formed. On his philosophical studies there remains a curious side-light. Matthew Fullerton, a member of Seward's class from Pennsylvania,

on January 28, 1819, wrote to a friend in Philadelphia a letter which gives an interesting view.[1] "The question you asked," he says, "respecting the opinion of the students of Mr. Stewart's treatise on the philosophy of the human mind just occurs. The time we spent in studying it enabled me to gather their thoughts on that subject at least during that session. Our class and all classes in this college were averse to the study of metaphysics. The Pope never issued his anathemas with more vehemence against the abandoned heretic, than the seniors of this institution against metaphysical writers in general, more particularly against Mr. Stewart. No mercy is extended to him, as he is the most immediate author of all our ontological troubles. His exertions for the improvement of science met with contempt—they are considered as useless and his whole treatise dry and repulsive. You must not," he goes on, however, "draw from what I have said an inference unfavorable to all my classmates:—for it is my impression that few would now, when the labor of study is over, entertain such an opinion of that important work. The opinion that has been formerly professed in college is what warps the judgment of many. There is an established faith, and whoever dissents from it is a heretic; and as much exposed to punishment as the man that in a preceding age believed in the existence of such animals as antipodes."

[1] Matthew Fullerton to George Potts. Perkins MSS. Seward was not in college at just this time, but he had been until within a month.

Seward was probably not unlike the rest; one of the few anecdotes which he himself preserves for us concerning his college studies shows much the same kind of temper. It tells us how the class in Homer, in reciting to the abstracted Francis Wayland, considered it a grievance when they were called upon out of turn, and were thereby disturbed in the reading of the novels which they used to bring with their copy of the chief of poets. It is probable that the college work was an intellectual discipline rather than an intellectual stimulus.

It must have been that Seward learned something from Dr. Nott, partly because the president was one of the foremost educators of the day, and partly because Seward had through life a great respect for his character and opinion. If we ask just what it was that he learned from him, we may be pretty sure that it was not alone the theory of criticism to be found in Kames' *Elements*, long the favorite medium of teaching used by the president. Seward probably received from Dr. Nott something of the stamp of character that remained with him through life, —the combination of practical man and idealist. The two were not unlike in possessing this double character and were further alike in that neither of them could quite manage the combination. Dr. Nott seems to have been by nature a man of affairs: he was his true self in practical business, in making stoves,[1] managing lotteries, grading real estate.

[1] It was just about the time of Seward's graduation that he finished his "Fireplace and Chimney," on which he was said to have spent eight years and ten thousand dollars. Schenectady *Cabinet*, March 22, 1820.

His lines being cast in circumstances that demanded ideals, he found himself entirely able to create them. But he remained to the end a practical man of idealistic declarations. Seward developed in the same way, though the relation of the elements of his character differed. He was by nature an idealist, and by force of circumstances he became absorbed in practical affairs, and of course carried them on well. But neither he nor Dr. Nott was able to create and maintain an organic consistency between his acts and his ideals; the lack of harmony was always felt and sometimes jarringly.[1] What Seward learned instinctively from his teacher was probably the lesson that both the practical and the ideal were necessary and admirable, and that it was better to have both even if one could not entirely harmonize them. If we could truly realize for ourselves the day-to-day life of that time, we should be astonished that men did as well in this way as they did. When Seward came to Union College, there were, not a hundred miles from Schenectady, settlements where the school was taught only in summer by young men or women who themselves knew little more than the "three R's"; where lawyers and even judges had commonly more of the logic of common sense and daily experience than they had knowledge of the law; where ministers, if there were any at all, were simply such farmers or others who felt led on Sun-

[1] One of the best evidences of this feeling may be found in the *Reminiscences* of Carl Schurz, who admired Seward greatly at a distance, and became much prejudiced against him when he came to know him.

days to preach in the little log schoolhouse. Yet on these practical facts were built the college, the state, the church. It is not astonishing that men found a difficulty in accommodating practical affairs to the highest ideals; the astonishing thing is that they had any ideals at all.

Seward looked back with more interest upon his connection with the debating societies. The debating societies were, at this time, a recognized and important institution in American college life, holding in the mind of the student body something of the place that the fraternities have held since. The Adelphic Society, to which Seward belonged, and the Philomathean, were quasi-official institutions. They had well-furnished meeting-rooms in the college buildings; their annual debate was one of the ceremonies of commencement; their libraries were a very valuable adjunct to the college library. Among the students they supplied, with the class system, the bases of the social structure. This function has now been taken, as a rule, by the fraternities, but in Seward's day the fraternities belonged to the future, although the Phi Beta Kappa had existed for several years. To this society Seward was elected when a junior.

Beside Seward's scholastic and literary occupations, we get but a slight idea of what he did in college. A few years after his time, there was a gymnasium at Union with a teacher, Colonel Tarde, a retired Swedish officer.[1] It was after his time also that Professor Jackson formed the students

[1] Albany *Argus*, July 2, 1827.

into a military body which made an encampment each Fourth of July at some interesting place. While Seward was in college the only suggestion of athletic amusement that one finds is the account written by "Alumnus" of a walk to the Falls of Cohoes, and this is such as to make it very clear that trips of the kind were rare.[1] It may be added that the excursion was severely criticized by "Citizen," who held that students would be better employed in attending to their studies than in wandering about the country.[2] We cannot even surely say that Seward spent his leisure hours "with friend or book, straying up the rivulet and through the woods behind North College," as did his friend David Berdan.[3] His own account would lead us to believe that he spent much time in studying in his room, 38 North College.

In the middle of his senior year, Seward ran away from home and college, and went to Georgia where he taught in an academy for a while. His account of the episode is extremely entertaining; it gives a curious view of Northern resource and Southern hospitality. But perhaps the most significant thing about it all is the independent spirit of Seward himself. Though said to have been of a "docile" temper as a boy, he had once before left college on being reproved by Mr. Wayland, and only returned after some management by his honored president. On the later occasion his father was unwilling to

[1] Schenectady *Cabinet*, Dec. 8, 1819.
[2] *Ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1819.
[3] *Works*, Vol. III, p. 123.

pay his tailor's bills and some others, and he therefore left college without a word to either father or president. In after life he perhaps had more of this temper than most people imagined, but if so he succeeded in toning it down into mere independence and self-reliance. It may be added that the elder Seward was by no means as diplomatic a person as Dr. Nott: of his three sons, the eldest had a misunderstanding with his father and went to Illinois; William himself ran away to Georgia; and the next boy strayed from home and enlisted in the army. Seward learned much in Georgia; it was always a good thing for him to have lived for a while in a slave state.

When he came back, which he did in a few months at his parent's request, he went home, as it was useless to proceed to college until the new year, and studied law for some time in Goshen, the county town. At the beginning of the second term, he returned to Union and took his degree in July, 1820. On getting back to college he had a taste of the political excitement that was to make so large an element of his future life. But he evaded all difficulties and came out successfully as one of those who received highest honors, one of the three Adelphic speakers, and one of the class managers.

In estimating the effect on Seward's life, we should recognize that Schenectady itself must have been something of an influence, though in the main but a temporary one. The first thing he said of the town, as he looked back in later life, was this: "At

Schenectady I alighted on the banks of the Mohawk River, then [1816] navigated with bateaux. . . . It was not yet nor indeed until a much later period [1] that I was to conceive my first idea of the commercial and political importance of this great thoroughfare." Probably, however, Seward was insensibly led to favor the then existing carrying trade. The navigation of the Mohawk was at this time, and had long been, the great interest of the city. There were often forty or fifty large Durham boats in the port discharging and taking on cargo. Just about this time a daily line of packets, with cabins amidships, carried passengers to Utica. The merchants, shippers, forwarders, boatmen, as well as the boat-builders (for the boats were mostly constructed in Schenectady), and those occupied in the land carriage of goods and passengers to Albany, made up a large element of the population. It is natural that Seward should have been perhaps unconsciously impressed by the town and should have adopted its view; in this way we may in part explain the well-known essay in which he demonstrated "that the Erie Canal . . . was an impossibility, and that even if it should be successfully constructed, it would financially ruin the state." [2] Further explanation comes from general political conditions. Dr. Seward, and his son as well, both acted with that part of the Republican party just at this time called the "Bucktails," of whom the chief distinguishing characteristic was that they were op-

[1] Only about six years afterward. See p. 33.
[2] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 47.

posed by De Witt Clinton. As the Erie Canal, then in construction, was the especially Clintonian measure, we shall readily see how Seward, in the surroundings we have noted, could find little in it of value.

Seward had chosen his profession early in life, and at this time had already begun to read law with John A. Duer of Goshen. In the autumn of 1820, he went to New York and entered the office of John Anthon. A year and a half later he returned to Goshen to join Mr. Ogden Hoffman, who had lately moved there, and remained until he was ready to take his bar examination and settle for himself.

One would gladly know something of the year and a half that Seward spent in New York, but we get the very slightest glimpses of it. In his Autobiography he mentions only his connection with the literary society, the New York "Forum," in which already appeared his characteristic power to write better than he could speak. He tells us how he was unable to deliver his own compositions in a way to please or interest, and how he therefore exchanged productions with one of the most eloquent, who gave Seward's speech so that the applause echoed as far as Broadway, while his own delivery of his friend's essay was received in silence.

In the summer of 1821, there came to the office of Mr. Anthon a fellow student of college days. David Berdan was a man of ability, devoted to literature rather than to law, which he followed in order to have something to rely upon. Seward was much attached to him though he never sympathized

wholly with his artistic aspirations, or at least never made them his own. "How would you like to lead a literary life?" wrote Berdan to him a little later; "that is to say, be in possession of a competency, and instead of attaching yourself to the study of a particular science, range through the whole garden of knowledge?" Seward probably had something of the same desire for a competency that might allow him to follow out the ideals and plans that drifted through his mind; he certainly looked at the law chiefly as giving him such an income. But he had no idea of devoting his leisure time to literature: even now we may be pretty sure that his ambition had turned to public affairs. The more may we regret that we know so little of Seward's occupation during these years. It was while he was in New York that delegates were elected for the constitutional convention, and that they deliberated, and it was just after he had returned to Goshen that the results were offered to the people. It was while he was in New York that the discussions of Governor Clinton's "Green Bag Message" and the acts of Skinner's Council must have stirred his mind to a consideration of the true principles of party politics; and the political activities of the Tammany Society in New York City must have given him many practical ideas on the same topic. But there is almost nothing to help us look back to that period. He made no connections that we can discern in later life, however much he may have laid foundations by study and thought. Almost his only recollection of these

years that has come down to us gives a curiously unexpected idea of his day-to-day life. Ten years afterward, being in the city, he found nothing left of the old associations, and looked back from the pressure of his political activities to "the idleness, the poetic feeling, the buoyant enjoyments of that period."[1] No one would think of these things as belonging to Seward's life at that time, and yet perhaps this suggestion will give us as much conception of it as would many pages that told just what he did.

Although he had studied law in New York City, Seward decided to practice in the western part of the state, which was at this time being populated with great rapidity. An innate sympathy for and interest in people made him prefer to make his way in a new community to finding some position in the more settled life of the eastern part of the state. He passed his legal examination at Utica in October, 1822, and went on farther west to explore the frontier towns. He decided upon Auburn.

One reason for this determination, or it may be the chief reason why he went west at all, was that Auburn was the home of Miss Frances Miller, a fellow student of Seward's sister at Miss Willard's School in Troy. The somewhat dusty investigations among political histories and constitutional records are lighted up by the mention of this young lady, not so spirited, it is said, as her sister Miss Lizette, but with more charm. She was not the acknowledged belle of Auburn, nor did Seward

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 198.

become the most popular young man of the village. More striking figures in the society and amusements of the young people were Miss Sarah Payne who had so many lovers that she could hardly choose among them, and Mr. Van Schoonhoven Myers, who was a recognized wit. But they had their day and are no longer remembered by history, while the gracious and winning Miss Frances and her slight, red-haired admirer are the ones who make that village life worth recalling. On coming to Auburn, perhaps to see Miss Miller, Seward considered the opportunities of the place, and determined to remain.

A more "practical" reason for choosing Auburn was that, with the exception of Utica, it was then the chief town west of Albany. Rome had just been incorporated as a village; Syracuse was a village of a few hundreds and had only lately attained a separate name; Rochester had a population of hardly more than two thousand; and even Buffalo was not much larger. But Auburn at this time had a population of twenty-five hundred and was growing every day. It had risen rapidly from the settlement at Hardenburgh's Corners, was in a fertile country and on the great road to the West now thronged with emigrants. In Seward's day there passed through Auburn each year thousands of wagons bound for western New York and farther.[1] It was a busy

[1] Mrs. Deborah Bronson quotes Captain Francis Hall's statement that in 1815, 16,000 wagons went west over the Cayuga Bridge, and adds that it seems to her to be not exaggerated. *Recollections of My Early Life:* Cayuga Historical Society Collections, No. 6, 1888.

place with churches, a bank, an academy, a newspaper, all gathered in hardly more than a dozen years. One thing about Auburn seemed more important than it did later, or rather it seemed important for a different reason: the village was on high land. At the time this was an advantage because it gave Auburn the water-power which caused its first growth. But it also prevented the Erie Canal from coming any nearer than Weedsport, seven miles away. In 1823, however, the canal was still unfinished, the difficulties of position were unappreciated, and Auburn was the chief place in all that part of the state.

Miss Frances was the daughter of Judge Miller, one of the principal men of the town. An old Federalist, in earlier days the leading political figure of the village, he had for some time been county judge. But his term of service was drawing to a close, and in returning to the practice of law he was glad of the opportunity to associate himself with an active and a well-educated young man.

Settled at Auburn by the beginning of 1823, Seward at once took up seriously the business of life, both private and public. His law practice he was able to carry on to the satisfaction of those whom he served: from the very first year he made a reasonable living. Life was not so complex in those days and money went farther than it does now. We can judge of Seward's idea of a livelihood from his agreement with his senior partner, that if, during the first year, his share in the profits should fall short of $500, the deficiency should be

made up. He was fortunately able to exceed that amount. He tried his own and Judge Miller's cases in the justice's courts; he attended to mercantile business and collecting, and to the questions of land titles that were constantly arising; he became known for his care and skill in drawing up papers. His mode of life was simple; he contented himself with a room behind his office, and boarded with a little set of young men, who like himself were in Auburn to make their fortunes and grow up with the country. "Lawyers, merchants, and bankers," he described them in his Autobiography, half humorously. Perhaps there were not a few of them who like many Americans of that day followed not only all those occupations in turn, but others as well. In one thing, however, all were doubtless alike, and that was their determination to do everything for Auburn that they could, to make it a place worth living in. "It was a busy town," he wrote, looking back in 1841,[1] "filled with adventurous spirits." He gives us a good idea of his own temper. In his earlier legal experiences, he tells us, the lawyer had been supposed to stick to his office and his law books. He, however, broke away from such narrowness: he read his law books when necessary, but took care also to read the papers and magazines and reviews, as well as other new publications of the day. He not only attended to his office, but manifested a keen interest in whatever else was going on in town. He took a pew in the Episcopal church, joined the militia, presided over a debating society, and

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 544.

even managed dancing assemblies, though he had no skill in dancing himself. Most important of all, he went to political meetings, characteristically "acting generally as secretary." He was definitely settled in life.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

PRECISELY how Seward turned to politics cannot now be said. Doubtless the idea of a public life had been for some time in his mind. He himself tells us that he practiced law for a competence only; that politics was the great and engrossing business of the country; that he regarded the rights and responsibilities of citizenship at that time more highly than any one he ever met. The real question was not whether he should go into politics, but with what party he should act.

Political feeling was then very strong, but party organizations were not so sharply defined as they had been, or as they were later. There was very little of the political machinery of our own day which does so much to render these permanent. Party politics in the state of New York fluctuated and varied and changed so as to be very confusing. The old Federalist party had practically passed away and its members had sought new connections. The name was often used for individuals.[1] On the

[1] "The name Federalist is almost universally dropped in this district, in the district of which Oneida County is part, and in the Herkimer County meeting." Clinton to Post, Oct. 21, 1822. On the other hand, a year afterward Flagg wrote to Van Buren, Nov. 12, 1823: "A Federalist of the old school is elected in Franklin. . . . I fear that the Federal senator is elected in the fourth district." Van Buren MSS.

other hand, the Anti-Federal party, as it had once been called, always the stronger party in the state, now known indifferently as Republican or Democratic, had become the only party. It was therefore divided into factions, one gathering about the pre-eminent figure of De Witt Clinton and bearing his name, and the other led by Van Buren and commonly called the "Bucktails." Each faction assumed the party name, and spoke of the other sometimes as "the opposition" and sometimes as "Federalists." [1]

Between the two Seward made an easy choice. Clinton stood for the Erie Canal and the policy of internal improvement. Seward's father, living in Orange County, had been a regular Republican and a Bucktail, and so had Seward himself while at college. When he had come to Auburn, however, "certain scales dropped from his eyes," and as he went through the Mohawk Valley he began to appreciate the immense importance of that roadway to the new West. If he had needed more to determine his action, he would have found it in his law partner. Judge Miller had been a Federalist, but with the lapse of that party he had begun to act with Governor Clinton, and was now "confessedly at the head of the Clintonian party in Auburn." [2] It was

[1] The Albany *Argus* pretty uniformly calls the opposition papers "Federal," and is itself dubbed a "Federal sheet" by the Rochester *Telegraph*, for instance.

[2] MS. Memoir. He had been appointed First Judge of the county by Clinton in 1817, and was delegate to the Clintonian convention of 1826.

most natural, therefore, that Seward should ally himself to the Clintonian side of politics.

So far as national affairs, also, were concerned, Seward found no difficulty in reaching an opinion. Whether he was ever one of those who thought of Clinton as a candidate for President, we cannot say.[1] Now and for some years that idea had found expression at one public meeting or another, though never at Auburn. We may suppose that Seward's mind settled readily upon Adams as the obvious candidate for one who thought as he did on the subject of internal improvement. The need of the nation, he felt, as he long afterward described his ideas, was "a policy which shall strengthen its foundation, increase its numbers, develop its resources, and extend its dominion." But the tendencies of the Republican party at large seemed to him not to lead in that direction. Van Buren and those who acted with him favored Crawford of Georgia. The Clintonians were divided: some urged Clinton himself to accept a nomination; some desired Adams, some Jackson, and a few Clay. Seward, with feelings even then concerning the harmful economic effects of slavery, determined to favor Adams.

But though these matters were important and had much to do with settling Seward's place in the political world of Auburn, Cayuga County, and New York State, there were other matters of greater immediate significance. Seward was not a man who

[1] The *Cayuga Republican* of Jan. 29, 1823, gives the news of Clinton's nomination at public meetings in Ohio, but does not take up the idea itself.

thought his political duties done when he had considered policies and candidates, determined for whom he would vote, and had voted. These he did as a matter of course, but he did more too. He wanted to take such part in public life as would count. He was young, but he was one of the educated men of the village; he could think and write effectively. He undoubtedly took a keen interest not only in national or state policies, but in what was going on under his very eyes in Auburn. He began his law practice the year of the promulgation of the new constitution. He had voted for it, and he approved highly of those of its provisions which seemed steps toward a larger democracy. But there were other matters in the constitution, the full import of which he learned only after some practical experience; namely, the provisions relating to appointment to office.

The first immediately important political event that took place in Auburn after Seward began to consider public affairs, was the appointment of Gershom Powers to the position of First Judge of the county, heretofore held by Seward's partner, Elijah Miller. This event pointed directly to the appointment of Mr. Powers' brother-in-law, Enos T. Throop, as Circuit Judge of the Seventh District, which shortly came about.[1] These appointments were significant in the world of politics; they meant Bucktail supremacy in Cayuga.

The judge in those days was in one respect a very

[1] Powers was appointed January 29th, Throop April 21st, both by Governor Yates.

different sort of person from his successor of the present. He was usually an active politician, appointed for political reasons and expected to act in concert with the men who appointed him. Judge Throop, like the other judges of the state, was a strict party man. No one questioned his integrity or the purity of his action upon the bench; but he was known to be inflexibly devoted to party and to party leaders,[1] and had been the main instrument in turning the politics of the county from Federalism to Republicanism. He had been postmaster of Auburn from 1809 to 1815, county clerk of Cayuga from 1815 to 1819, and had served a term in Congress. When in 1823 it was the duty of the governor to appoint eight circuit judges for the state, it was understood by everybody that he would make his selection from his own political friends. No one in the county was better fitted from the political standpoint than Mr. Throop.

But the appointment of a circuit judge had an especial interest just then, because the circuit judge was a well-recognized factor in the political machinery of the state. Under the new constitution, the circuit judge was to be the successor of the justice of the Supreme Court, who rode on circuit. At a time when the state was thinly settled and transportation was difficult, the justice on circuit, who went into every county and had an acquaintance with lawyers

[1] Jenkins, in his life of Throop (*Lives of the Governors*, p. 543), denies these views of Hammond, Vol. II., p. 335; but in his life of Seward (*Ib.* p. 636) he writes, "The politics of the county at this time received their tone from Mr. Throop."

everywhere, was a political bond between the great men of the party at Albany and the little men of the party all over the state. Under the old system, when an immense number of appointments were made by the old council, the justice of the Supreme Court was a very influential person.[1] Under the new constitution the appointing power was very much curtailed, but still a considerable patronage was left to the governor with the Senate, and the judge of the circuit district was an important means by which this power was to be used for party good. He was assisted by the judges of the county courts, but these officials were also appointed in the same way as the circuit judge. All appointments and removals as well were frankly political, and the appointive power was still considerable. County supervisors had always been elected: by the new constitution, sheriffs also were to be elected. But the justices of the peace, as well as many other officials, from village presidents to notaries public, were still to be appointed. The justices, of whom there were more than twenty-five hundred in the state, were regarded as an especially influential element in politics. Rufus King in a speech in the constitutional convention put the matter well. "Each of these justices," he said, "employs his constables or marshals, and is attended by the small lawyers who excite and sustain the suits which are tried before the justices. There being on the average four justices in each

[1] Hammond, *Political History*, Vol. I, p. 420 f., describes in some detail the way in which he could be a political force. He ascribes the system to Chief-Justice Spencer.

town, the justices, the constables, the suitors, the pettifoggers, and the idle attendants, make together a great collection of people. Indeed so important is this magistracy and its associates in the state, that it has been said in relation to their offices, that he who can control or dispose of their appointments, would possess greater political influence than were he able to dispose of all the other offices throughout the state." [1]

Judge Miller, having retired from the bench, was shortly elected a county supervisor. One of the first duties of this office was to nominate justices of the peace. As the new constitution stood, lists of justices were to be named separately by the supervisors, and by the county judges. If the lists agreed, those designated were confirmed: if they disagreed, they were sent to the governor who made his choice between them. In Cayuga County the lists agreed and in spite of Judge Miller, the judges and the supervisors, being in the main of the same political party, at once named for the county sixty justices "of their own political stripe." [2] Perhaps this was merely what was to be expected; if supervisors and judges were of the same political party, it might have been proper that the justices should

[1] *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention:* Carter and Stone, p. 315. The view was common. *Cf.* Hammond, Vol. I, p. 420. Samuel Beardsley, writing to Ela Collins, Sept. 20, 1821, says, "Though but of trifling consequence individually, yet when arrayed together, they need not shrink from contrasting their official power with any other class of officials in the state." Van Buren MSS.

[2] See the letter of "Brutus," *Cayuga Republican*, March 26, 1823.

be also. But it soon appeared that this was not all. In other counties where the elected supervisors and the appointed judges differed, the nominations were sent to the governor. It was immediately noticed that Governor Yates always endorsed the nominations of the judges who were his own appointees. In fact, the justices of the peace were no more elective than they had been. The supervisors, who represented the people, might name the justices only on condition that they should be satisfactory to the governor.[1]

A change in the mode of appointing the justices became, therefore, an issue of importance and we may be sure that Seward was upon the popular and Clintonian side. There arose also another question of the sort, but of greater immediate significance. At this time presidential electors were chosen in New York by the legislature. But it was now charged that Van Buren, the recognized leader of the Bucktail party and United States senator, had promised the vote of the state to Crawford. Of all the presidential candidates, excepting Calhoun, Crawford had the least following in New York. Adams or Clinton, even Clay and perhaps Jackson, would have commanded a larger popular vote. It was now proposed to change the mode of choosing presidential electors and give the election to the people. Agitation to this end immediately began, especially in the city of New York and the lower river counties, and the People's party arose upon

[1] Van Buren was chairman of the committee which had reported this plan to the constitutional convention.

this issue. It included many who, although opposed to Van Buren on this question, were yet not Clintonians: for instance, Seward's father, a prominent man in Orange County, favored it, though opposed to Clinton. But the Clintonians took up the issue[1] and in Cayuga County, though the People's party never reached formal organization, it yet became the important point in the canvass.[2] On October 13th, a public meeting at Auburn drew up resolutions in favor of direct elections. On the 21st, the county convention nominated candidates for the Assembly in favor of "direct election and the cause of the people." The other side was the side of "King Caucus."

Interest in this matter overshadowed that in the election of justices. On January 7, 1824, Henry Wheaton in the Assembly asked and obtained leave to bring in a bill for popular election of presidential electors; on January 13th, he proposed an amendment to the constitution, providing for the election of justices. But the former question was the more important and meetings in its favor were held all over the state. In spite of the Van Buren party, led on this occasion by Azariah Flagg, a man who soon became prominent, the electoral bill was passed by

[1] It was said, because they thought they could so manage to elect Clinton. "The fears that Mr. Clinton will get the vote of the state on a general ticket are by no means idle." Marcy to Van Buren, Jan. 11, 1824. Van Buren MSS.

[2] Note, for instance, that Seward was president of the Auburn Debating Club, which on Oct. 2, 1823, took for the subject of discussion, "Should the electors for President and Vice-President be chosen by the legislature as they now are, or immediately by the people?"

the Assembly. When it went to the Senate, however, it was indefinitely postponed, seventeen senators voting against it. For a time these seventeen were the main target for obloquy throughout the state, but on the last day of the session there occurred another event which further aroused public feeling, and for the moment strengthened the alliance of the discordant elements with which Seward felt political sympathy. De Witt Clinton was removed from his position as president of the canal board.

The act was entirely political. It had been long contemplated by the Van Buren leaders.[1] The year before there had been rumors that steps were to be taken in the legislature. First it was said that Victory Birdseye, senator from the seventh district, had a resolution to this effect; a week later the report was that there was to be a reorganization of the canal board which should leave out Clinton and Myron Holley.[2] Neither of these rumors came to anything, but at the end of the session of 1824, the occasion seemed good. If such a resolution were offered, the People's party leaders, Wheaton and Tallmadge, who were bitterly opposed to Clinton, would be forced to take a position for or against

[1] "From all I can collect at this place, I apprehend that there is a strong disposition among many, and perhaps a majority of our friends throughout the state, to turn out the whole of the Clintonian canal commissioners. As to the governor [Clinton] I presume there is no diversity of opinion and that *he ought to go*." P. B. Porter to Van Buren, Nov. 1. 1820. Van Buren did not agree. "Judge Skinner behaves quite well; now and then he indulges his spleen against *certain persons* for keeping Clinton in the board of canal commissioners." Marcy to Van Buren, Jan. 11, 1824. Van Buren MSS.

[2] *Cayuga Republican*, March 5 and 12, 1823.

him. It seemed a chance to split the opposition. The result, however, showed the wisdom of Van Buren, who had disapproved the step: the People's party leaders voted against Clinton but their followers all over the state took up his issue and the Clintonians became zealous in the cause of "the people."[1] The feeling was strong at Auburn as elsewhere. On the Fourth of July the following toasts were drunk:

"The Electoral Law: called for by the wishes and wisdom of the people; opposed by a faction selfish and corrupt."

"The Seventeen Senators: seventy times seven offenders against the rights of the people. Once more—and they will have filled up the measure of their transgression."

"The People: there is a majesty in their will, against which none can sin and be forgiven."

We may be sure that Seward was present on this occasion for he delivered the oration of the day.

In an extra session called in July, the seventeen senators did fill up "the measure of their transgression" by their continued refusal to pass an electoral bill; and with these steps we come to Seward's first definite appearance in politics. When the county convention (calling itself Republican, but really Clintonian) met at Auburn, Seward was a delegate and wrote the address.[2]

[1] In the fall elections the Cayuga Clintonians called their ticket, "The People's Ticket."

[2] See the *Cayuga Republican*, Oct. 15, 1824, and *Works*, Vol. III, p. 335, where the main part is reprinted.

"Honest and honorable men," it stated, "are convinced that a combination exists in this state, enjoys its honors and wields its powers, whose principles and practices are at war with its best interests, its prosperity and its fame." This is the first note that we now get of an opposition which greatly influenced Seward's political action for many years.

The true history of the Albany "Regency," as this combination was called at the time of Seward's address and afterward, is not very exactly known, but the main lines are fairly clear. The new constitution made a great change in the politics of the state, so great that it was thought of by some as a revolution. It was clear that there would have to be new political methods to suit the new political conditions. The old system of appointments had been given up: the new system was somewhat experimental.

The new system had been reported to the convention from a committee of which Martin Van Buren had been chairman. For some years the leading opponent of Governor Clinton in state politics, he was at this time in Washington as United States senator. He affected to have nothing to say about New York politics; he had seen enough of them for many years. He had made his *début* in the Senate; his present position was exactly what he liked and he had no desire to change it.[1] But for all his protestations, he was in constant communication with those who had previously

[1] Van Buren to Worth. Van Buren MSS.

acted with him or under him. These close political friends of Van Buren became a definite force in New York politics: they were called all sorts of names, sometimes a cabinet council, sometimes a cabal, sometimes a junto, but most permanently the "Regency."[1]

Of Van Buren's early political friends, the chief figure was Roger Skinner, a powerful and an acrid personality, a politician of the old school, at first state senator and now United States judge and retired from politics except in an advisory character. Though often spoken of as a force in the Regency councils, he rather held himself apart during the years of Seward's entrance upon public life.[2] Of greater active importance at this time was William L. Marcy who had come into politics more lately, and when Skinner managed the council of appointment, had been made adjutant-general. Associated with these three were Benjamin F. Butler, Van Buren's law partner; Benjamin Knower, the presi-

[1] The name is sometimes attributed to Thurlow Weed, but the evidence is rather against it. In the Rochester *Telegraph*, of which Weed was at this time the editor, the name first occurs Aug. 17, 1824, by which time it may be found in various other papers. It became common in the campaign following, but its origin is earlier. The first use I have met with is in the Albany *Advertiser* of Jan. 17, 1824, where we read of "the cabinet council of Van Buren, or rather the regency whom he has appointed to govern the state in his absence." The members of this presumed council are designated: Leake, Talcott, Knower, Skinner and Butler. The name, however, did not immediately become popular. It is rarely found before Aug., 1824.

[2] So Dudley to Van Buren, Dec. 21, 1821; Marcy to Van Buren, Jan. 11, 1824. Van Buren MSS. He died in the summer of 1825.

dent of the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank; and Moses Cantine, the editor of the Albany *Argus* and state printer. These gentlemen "acted together," according to a political phrase then current, in the days when Clinton and Van Buren strove for the supremacy of the Republican party. As time went on, some changes occurred: Judge Skinner acted less and less with the others; Mr. Cantine's place was taken by Edwin Croswell, a young man who became one of the most brilliant of political editors; and in 1819 Samuel A. Talcott of Utica was added to the group.

At the first election under the new constitution in the fall of 1822, it was a matter of great importance who should be governor. The governor was to appoint a large number of officials, including the new circuit judges who were to be removable for cause only, and it was obvious that they would be an influential element in the control of the state for a long time to come. A number of candidates were prominent. The friends of Governor Clinton, however, became convinced that he could not be re-elected and he declined a nomination. Van Buren's intimate friends desired that he should offer himself,[1] but he replied that he preferred his position as senator. Marcy, Talcott, Skinner, and Cantine then thought they could nominate General Porter.[2] Colonel Young and Nathan Sanford, both prominent men, had something of a following. More popular

[1] Talcott to Van Buren, Feb. 7, 1822; Knower to Van Buren, March 4, 1822. Van Buren MSS.

[2] Ulshoeffer to Van Buren, March 11, 1822. Van Buren MSS.

than any of those mentioned, however, was Judge Yates, a conservative man, who had long been a member of the Supreme Court. When it came to the legislative caucus, in which nominations were then made, Van Buren's friends left Porter and gave their votes to Yates, who was elected over Colonel Young. The nomination was equivalent to an election for there was no real opposition. Almost every member of the Senate and Assembly chosen at that time was a regular Republican; that is, neither a Federalist nor a Clintonian.

The election of state officers took place early in the new year, 1823. The comptrollership was the matter of most importance. Van Buren's friends put forward Marcy and were joined by the governor's party. Colonel Young's friends nominated James Tallmadge. There was a good deal of excitement but Marcy was elected, which "rendered everything safe and tranquil."[1] The appointment of circuit judges was the next matter of importance. Governor Yates proved himself somewhat intractable. He consulted few people and was especially unfriendly to Van Buren,[2] who, he thought, had called a caucus in New York to control his conduct. But while he did not care for Van Buren, he behaved as though he did.[3] The appointments were

[1] Skinner to Van Buren, Feb., 1823. Van Buren MSS.

[2] "He feels particularly unfriendly to you." Skinner to Van Buren, Feb., 1823. Van Buren MSS.

[3] "Your friends will be provided for. Duer will be made a circuit judge. Throop also." Sutherland to Van Buren, Feb., 1823. Van Buren MSS.

made on strictly party lines, and, as we have seen, ensured the county patronage.

Van Buren and his friends had helped nominate and elect Governor Yates, who recognized their action, and by the means devised by Van Buren himself, their joint influence was diffused over the state. The friends of Van Buren had now become a powerful body. He himself was in the Senate of the United States, Marcy was comptroller, Knower was state treasurer, Talcott was attorney-general, Croswell was state printer. Two younger men, Azariah Flagg and Silas Wright, were in the Assembly and the Senate, respectively. It was a strong combination, holding or controlling almost all the offices in the state, and influencing the press and the banks, through the Albany *Argus* and the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank. They continued in power almost constantly for twenty years.

Such was the body against which Seward directed the address of 1824, "an institution which combines in one strong phalanx the office-holders from the governor and senators down to the justices of the peace in the most remote parts of the state; which makes the governor a subservient tool of the faction which designates him; converts the otherwise respectable judiciaries of the counties into a shambles for the bargain and sale of offices; and selects justices of the peace (in whose courts are decided questions involving a greater amount of property than in all the other tribunals of the state), not from among those whom an intelligent people would choose, but from the supple and needy para-

sites of power, who may, and it is to be feared do, bring not only influence but the very authority of their offices to the support of the party whose creatures they are." Stripping this statement of its flowers of rhetoric, it will be seen to set forth exactly what the Regency aimed to accomplish. Van Buren and his friends took New York politics as they found them. They believed, as did Seward, in political parties; they further believed that parties must be kept together through discipline, and nobody, not even Seward himself, could think of any party discipline not founded upon office. The Regency was no worse than any other group of politicians of their day, except in being successful.

The issue of 1824 was then practically an opposition to this body. The election of justices would deprive them of one political means; that of presidential electors would take from them another, though it is true that it was too late to influence the coming election. It was the year for choosing a governor, and in a state convention held at Utica, Clinton was nominated.[1] He was triumphantly elected by a very large majority.

[1] Henry Wharton, the leader of the People's party men in the Assembly, walked out of the convention when Clinton was nominated, followed by a number of delegates, including, I suppose, Seward's father who was a delegate from Orange County.

CHAPTER III

ADAMS AND CLINTON

WE shall not suppose that politics took up all of Seward's time. Shortly after the county convention, for which he wrote his Regency address, occurred his marriage to Miss Frances Miller. It had been largely through his interest in her that Seward had been attracted to Auburn, and this interest had led to an engagement. He had not been long settled there before his father came to visit him, and an excursion to Niagara Falls was planned by the elder Seward and Judge Miller. It was more of a matter than it would be to-day: the two parents provided a stage-coach for the party and it was made into a considerable excursion. We need not doubt that there was plenty of political discussion. Dr. Seward was a leading figure in Orange County. Hostile to Clinton, like the rest of that part of the state, he was yet strongly in favor of the electoral bill.[1] Judge Miller, on the other hand, was an old Federalist who had become a Clintonian. Opposed as he had been to extension of the suffrage, he now found himself drawn to a sympathy with the People's

[1] In July, 1824, he was chairman of a meeting in Goshen, Orange County, approving the electoral bill and condemning the Senate. But in September when he was delegate to the Utica convention, he opposed the nomination of Clinton. See *Proceedings of the New York State Convention*, Sept., 1824.

party. Seward himself, not much bound by previous considerations, agreed with both. As the party passed through Rochester, they met with a slight accident, which led to an acquaintance with Thurlow Weed. Here began a political friendship and a personal intimacy of the greatest significance. Mr. Weed was a most attractive and interesting person, at this time a printer and editor of the Rochester *Telegraph*, a strong Adams and Clinton man, now acting with the People's party, by whom he was sent to the Assembly in 1824. It was on this excursion, too, that Seward, as he became acquainted with Buffalo and its possibilities for the traffic of the West, grew more than ever fixed in his advocacy of the policy of internal improvement in state and nation.

With the year 1825 we may think of him as definitely settled in Auburn with a recognized position in the life of the place. He had married into one of the leading families of the town; he had an increasing law practice and was a familiar figure in the courts; he had also made a definite mark in politics. He took part in all the enterprises of public interest in the neighborhood.

One of these enterprises we may tell of a little more at length. When John L. Hardenburgh settled on the outlet of Owasco Lake, it was because of the water-power. Hardenburgh's Corners became Auburn, a village of growing importance on the western road. When emigration pushed out through the Mohawk Valley, Auburn was an obvious stopping-place: in 1815 it is recorded that

16,000 wagons passed through the town. It grew rapidly and was prosperous. When the Erie Canal was projected and finished, however, it became evident that there was a new factor in the situation. Rochester and Syracuse upon the canal began to increase in population in the most striking manner. Auburn was on high land, and there had never been hope that the canal could be brought through her bounds. But it was now felt that if the town could be connected with the Erie Canal, there would be an opportunity by means of Owasco Lake to reach the country on the Susquehanna and gain a considerable part of the commercial activity and prosperity that lay in the future.

Seward with his immense interest in practical affairs, and especially in internal improvements, was of course concerned in this plan. Judge Miller was one of its most earnest advocates. In 1820 a meeting had considered the project visionary but in 1825 interest in it revived, and David Thomas was employed to survey the route from the Owasco to the summit level. His results were very favorable.[1] He also surveyed the route from the Erie Canal to the foot of Owasco Lake. But as it was impossible to get the state to take up the matter, it hung fire. In 1827 another meeting was held, on January 12th, and it was put in the hands of Seward and eight others to report. Seward induced Elkana Watson to visit the outlet and give an opinion. His view may be read in the *Cayuga Republican* for June 30, 1827: it is favorable and even enthusiastic;

[1] Albany *Advertiser*, Dec. 1st.

Auburn he believed might readily have its place upon a navigable thoroughfare between Chesapeake Bay and New York State. A company was formed in which Seward took some stock, and he also acted upon the committee to memorialize the legislature. Before this plan was carried out, however, came the railroad that connected Auburn with the commercial world in a more effective manner. The project, though nothing came of it, is typical of the enterprise of those who had it in hand.

Politics was the main issue, though the immediate excitements had rather passed away. The election of Clinton as governor had been followed by that of Adams as President. The electoral law and the election of justices seemed in the way of being settled rightly. It was a time for organizing. "Uniting with the opponents of the Republican party," says Seward, "I spoke for the new movement, wrote resolutions and addresses and acted as delegate in meetings in my own town and county." He was, in fact, greatly interested in a change that was going on in political methods.

In the years preceding the constitution of 1822, public affairs were carried on by a comparatively small number of persons. The electorate was very small, about one-third of what it is now.[1] On the

[1] The difference will be seen by a comparison of the vote for governor in 1820 and 1900.

	Vote	*Population*	*Percentage of voters*
1820—	93,437	1,372,812	6.81
1900—	1,548,551	7,268,894	21.56

other hand, the appointing power was very great: the only officials elected by the people were governor and lieutenant-governor, the members of the national House of Representatives, the members of the state legislature, the county supervisors and certain minor town officials. Presidential electors, like United States senators, were elected by the legislature, and all other officials from chief-justice of the Supreme Court down to the notaries public, the public auctioneers, and the inspectors of hay, grain, etc., were appointed by a Council of Appointment. As nominations to the principal elective offices were made by legislative caucus, it will be perceived that the political situation could readily be controlled by a small number of persons. The new constitution enlarged the franchise and made very many officers elective. We have seen how political action was at once directed to the election of justices of the peace and presidential electors.

A change began to take place also in the extra legal methods of politics. The legislative caucus began to give way to the convention. In the election of 1822 Yates was nominated by legislative caucus and Southwick, who offered something of an opposition, nominated himself. At the next election, in 1824, however, the opponents of the Regency called a state convention to nominate. This was a new departure, but a successful one: in 1826 another convention was called by the Clintonians, and this year their opponents followed their example. Conventions had long been held for the election of county and district officers: this was but the exten-

sion of a current system; it was soon proposed to make it national.

The system was still far from complete. There was no central organization:[1] each locality acted for itself under the guidance of local politicians more or less in touch with one another. The calling of meetings was a matter of spontaneity, sometimes attended to by the president and the secretary of a previous meeting, sometimes by a committee of correspondence, sometimes by leading men of the party. The Utica convention of 1826 declared that the convention of 1824 had been an experiment which had proved successful, but urged that some provision for permanent action was necessary.[2] Nominations for Congress or the legislature were still made with less formality: the nomination by convention was the common course, but, especially at just this time, persons often offered themselves as candidates. "I had an active though humble part in these proceedings," says Seward in speaking of these matters. For such service his gifts were most useful. Having, as we have seen, the power of expressing himself effectively in writing, he was employed in drawing up resolutions and addresses, and in acting as delegate and secretary.

It was, then, into a changing political world that Seward as a young man made his way, and he gave his best effort to the movements which promoted the change. He approved of the larger electorate

[1] Hence an irresponsible body like the Regency was really a natural result.

[2] Resolutions in Albany *Advertiser*, Sept. 25, 1826.

and the smaller appointing power. He approved of the wider appeal to the people by committee and convention, and the lesser use of the caucus.[1] These objects were helped by the election of 1824 in which Clinton had been made governor, and Seward was the more confirmed thereby in his opposition to the Regency. As the matter lay in his mind, this was a combination directed by Van Buren for the political advantage of its own members, which advantage had called for the election of Crawford to the presidency. Not only was the whole Regency system wrong, but the candidacy of Crawford or any other Southern man was obviously detrimental to the true interests of the country. It would oppose internal improvements and defend slavery. It would continue the Virginia dynasty of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe; for Crawford, though not a Virginian himself, was the regular Southern candidate, the candidate, for instance, of the Richmond Junto, a more formidable combination than the Albany Regency. This combination of personal politics in the chief states of the North and the South, Seward remarked and was much influenced by it.[2]

As he understood the political situation, the im-

[1] Although the caucus was much decried, and though both parties substituted the convention in the state and the nation, yet of course the legislative caucus remained a useful political means employed by all parties.

[2] He said afterward, "I do not know who was before myself in taking notice of this coalition in the political transactions of 1824 and 1828." *Life*, Vol. I, p. 37. There is some reference to the supposed conjunction in the newspapers during the winter of 1824–1825. See a letter in the Albany *Advertiser*, Nov. 13, 1824, and an article with a quotation from the Richmond *Enquirer* in the same for May 30, 1825.

portant thing was to effect a union between the friends of Adams and of Clinton; of internal improvements in the state and in the nation; of better and more truly democratic politics. "I felt myself obliged," he writes in his Autobiography,[1] "to adhere through all chances and changes to the new political organization of 1824 as the party through whose agency the great interests of the state and nation to which I had dedicated myself could be promoted." Doubtless he threw himself earnestly into the work of organizing into a party[2] the different elements in favor of the ideas and principles that were to him all-important. But he had to deal with actual political conditions, and the really essential political movement of those years was not the formation of an Adams party, but the formation of a Jackson party.

The rise of Jacksonian democracy in New York was not so immediate nor so rapid as in the South and West. The defeat of Jackson in the House in 1825, and the appointment by President Adams of Clay as his Secretary of State, were taken by many as a proof of a "corrupt bargain." The Richmond Junto was at once in opposition. "I care not what

[1] Page 64.

[2] In the Autobiography he calls it "our new National Republican party." But here it seems as though his memory must have been at fault. The name "National Republican" does not appear at this time; in fact, not till 1829, in any document that I have seen. Calls for conventions, addresses and resolutions, political news and editorials of the years 1824–1828, use all sorts of other titles but not that. The party had no definite name. The point is not without significance: it lacked a name partly because it had no real political coherence.

principles regulate Mr. Adams' and Mr. Clay's administration," said a writer in the Richmond *Enquirer;* "I care not how they conduct themselves, they must be put down." The Albany Regency, however, was by no means so outspoken.[1] It was three years before the *Argus* came out definitely for Jackson. Van Buren believed in a "non-committal" policy and his friends maintained it firmly for some time.

But although the Jackson cult was not so strong in New York as elsewhere, there were other conditions in the state which made the course of those who agreed with Seward by no means easy. It is true that Clinton had been elected by a large majority and that Adams had received not only a large majority of the electoral votes of the state, but also the vote of the state in the House. It is true that both Clinton and Adams believed in those great material improvements which Seward recognized to be so necessary for the progress of the country. The Erie Canal was almost completed and the agitation for subsidiary canals had begun. The question of a state road through the southern counties from the Hudson to Buffalo had become important. Further important matters concerning the franchise and election to office were on a fair way to settlement. It would seem as though there were a great opportunity for men, who like Seward believed in these things, to work together.

[1] It was not so outspoken as some Clintonians: for instance, J. C. Spencer, even before the election, prophesied opposition to Adams. Tracy to Spencer, Hollister MSS.

But from the standpoint of partisan politics, matters were not so simple. Seward, like many others among the voters if not among the politicians, favored Adams and Clinton. Unfortunately those leaders did not harmonize. Adams, it is true, offered Clinton the position of minister to England, but he declined it, and though not opposed to the President, gave no sign of especial adherence to him. Neither the Clintonian papers, nor the Clintonian politicians were unitedly for Adams.[1] In the early part of his administration there was still talk of Clinton himself as President, although the governor probably never authorized such expressions. In the first months of 1824, he seems to have considered a coalition with the Regency on the basis of Jackson as a candidate.[2] Later his friends represented to the President that he desired closer relations, but neither of the principals offered any advances. In fact, Adams made several appointments that he must have known were most distasteful to the governor and his party.[3] There were certainly in the state people who like Seward were

[1] The *Cayuga Republican*, for instance, while not clearly for Jackson in 1825 and 1826, inclined in that direction. J. C. Spencer, the Clintonian senator from the seventh district, was an open Jackson man.

[2] See *Life of Weed*, Vol. I, p. 165, for an account of a meeting at Governor Clinton's between some political friends of the governor's and of Van Buren's.

[3] Notably that of S. R. Betts to be United States judge of the southern district of New York. Of this Thurlow Weed in the Rochester *Telegraph* said, "All the fruits of the triumph, which New York obtained for Mr. Adams, have been deliberately bestowed upon those who labored most zealously to defeat his election." Albany *Advertiser*, Feb. 5, 1827.

loyal to Adams and Clinton, but they had little to hold them together.

The Regency at first, it would seem, was silently supporting Crawford. That formidable body was, by some opponents, exulting in the majorities of 1824, considered as dead: "the quondam Regency" it was called.[1] But this idea was an error. The Regency was by no means dead: it was indeed apparently becoming more organic, more conscious of itself and its influence. Judge Skinner died in the summer of 1825 and just at this time Mr. Knower had almost retired from active politics; but Marcy, Talcott, Butler and Croswell must have come to a very thorough understanding of their power. On them, it would appear, Van Buren in Washington chiefly relied.[2] Silas Wright was still in the state Senate, and Azariah Flagg shortly became Secretary of State. As a party, they certainly had the most able political intelligence. They held the higher offices of the state, and under the new constitution could not easily be turned out. And though there was no such formal party organization as to-day, they still had the party name: they were the successors of the Republicans of 1798.[3]

With these hindrances in the way of strong or-

[1] Albany *Advertiser*, April 25, 1825.

[2] *E. g.*, at the end of a letter from Van Buren to Croswell, we have the direction: "Look at this part of the case minutely with the aid of the General [Marcy], Mr. Talcott and Butler."

[3] It is true that the Clintonians also often called themselves Republicans. The party newspapers sometimes took or retained the name, as the *Cayuga Republican* of Auburn, the *Columbia Republican* of Hudson. The Albany *Advertiser*, a Clintonian paper, commonly speaks of the Republican ticket.

ganization within, and this powerful opposition without, it is no wonder that the party was brought together with great difficulty. Perhaps it hardly was a party; it was rather a set of incongruous elements which had been united by circumstances for an especial crisis. At the very beginning, in the Utica convention it was obvious that the Clintonians could agree on only one point, the electoral reforms. When this point was carried, there was no further reason for keeping together. Seward saw with regret that "the organization became torpid and declined in strength." At the Utica convention of 1826, Clinton was renominated for governor. Seward may have been present at this convention; Judge Miller was a delegate and one of the committee which drew up the address. But Clinton, who had carried the state in 1824 by 16,900, was elected in 1826 by 3,650 only, while the candidate for lieutenant-governor was beaten. When the legislature met, a United States senator was to be chosen. The Adams men held a caucus, but could gather only a few Clintonians; the Bucktails, whether favoring Adams or not, voted for Van Buren. Van Buren himself at this time was, or was said to be, non-committal as to the presidency. He apparently desired to conciliate Clinton; the chances were that both would be on Jackson's side in 1828.

This possibility was a death-blow to Seward's hopes of a new party, although perhaps he did not clearly understand it at once. The material for the party consisted of Clintonian Adams men like himself, former Federalists like his father-in-law, Peo-

ple's party men like his father, and such disaffected Republicans as might be won over. At best, it was a difficult combination. A strong, popular leader like Jackson or a strong political leader like Van Buren might have held them together; but a national leader like Adams and a state leader like Clinton could not. And now it appeared probable that Clinton himself was in favor of the Regency's candidate. Some of his friends, like John C. Spencer, the senator from Seward's district, had long been open Jackson men; some of the recognized Clintonian papers had advocated Jackson. Many individual supporters of Adams,—for instance, Thurlow Weed,—must have known how Clinton stood. In the winter of 1826-1827 rumors began to be persistent that he was coming to an understanding with Van Buren. The understanding was denied by Clintonians and Bucktails alike, but the *Argus* remarked blandly that probably both would support Jackson the next year.

Under these circumstances, Seward had an experience with the adversities of political life that long left an impression upon him. By the time of the campaign of 1827,[1] he had become a considerable figure in the political affairs of the county. When the surrogate resigned, he was advised to apply for the place; he went to Albany, made his application, and was recognized without question as a proper

[1] He says in his Autobiography (p. 66) that this occurrence took place in Jan., 1828. But it was really in Oct., 1827: the difference in date has some importance because it shows that the time was just before an election in which the Jackson and anti-Jackson lines were being closely drawn.

person for executive approval. Governor Clinton sent his nomination to the Senate.

But the situation was one that brought out all the political weakness of Seward's position. Interest in the presidential nomination was increasing and people were taking sides. Just at this time, on October 29, 1827, a meeting was called at the capital of "Republican citizens of Albany and other parts of the state opposed to the election of Andrew Jackson for President of the United States."[1] Seward went to the meeting in spite of the fact that his nomination lay before a Senate which had long been clearly Jacksonian.[2] The next day the Senate rejected his nomination as surrogate: one can hardly see how he could have expected it to be confirmed.

The meeting, however, had an importance of a more general character. It was the result of a good deal of communication between men who felt that they must find some better way to act in concert than they so far had. Heretofore, they had been held together by common adherence to the governor. But his defection, as they thought of it, though it was a severe blow to many, had at least this advantage;—it allowed them to unite upon an issue

[1] Seward himself (p. 67) calls it "a meeting held at the capital by the 'National Republicans' at Albany to consider the political dilemma" produced by Clinton's combination with Van Buren. But the name "National Republican" does not appear in anything that I can find about the meeting, which adopted distinctly administration and anti-Jackson resolutions.

[2] Six months before, on Van Buren's election, one Clintonian senator after another,—Spencer, Allen, Viele,—had declared himself for Jackson, while others had voted for Van Buren, which was much the same thing.

on which all thought alike. The meeting was called for those who opposed Jackson and it resulted in a coalition in favor of Adams. A committee was appointed which proceeded to attempt a more definite organization. They began to correspond with Adams men all over the state, urging the holding of county meetings and asking the cooperation of influential citizens in every town. The Regency papers condemned their action, but it was quite in accord with Seward's political creed, and doubtless he gave effective aid. All winter they labored to perfect their organization; in the spring they called a meeting in Albany which was attended by people from all over the state. This meeting published a call for a regular convention at Albany on June 10th, and that convention called another at Utica to nominate presidential candidates.

It is not clear why these two conventions should have been necessary, but the proceedings in general show a development and an organization of the convention system into something more definite than had existed before: that it was something new is quite clear from the abuse lavished upon it. To our minds to-day it seems quite proper for men who wish to carry out some political object to meet and devise an organization for that purpose. The objects of the organization we may criticize, but the means are entirely understood. In 1828, however, there was just enough reason to assail it for irregularity. The Albany *Argus*, during the spring, speaks of the whole movement, not only with the

natural scorn and contempt of a political opponent, but on the ground of its being a truly bad element in political life. "Republicans," said the *Argus*, April 15, 1828, "will arouse themselves to exertion in the old-fashioned way. They will indite no secret circulars, nor appoint central managers, nor fill the country with electioneering misstatements, nor call 'spirits' of all shades by a motley array of names to a Federal convention. They will act openly and aboveboard." When we remember that this was written by the close friend of the man who was at this time distinguished above all others in the country for skill in political manipulation, we shall be the better able to understand the change in political methods.

We may well ask what was this change. The "old-fashioned" plan was for the Republican members of the legislature to hold a caucus and call a convention. Then "having recommended a delegated expression of the wishes of the people in the fall, in the old way, for the selection of Republican candidates for governor and lieutenant-governor, they leave all else to the unbiassed will of an intelligent community." [1] What Mr. Croswell had in mind as he wrote the last sentence, one cannot be sure. Not long before he must have read the following from the New York *Enquirer*: [2] "We trust that every member [of the legislature] on his arrival among his constituents will animate them in their preparations for the ensuing election—that all the town and

[1] Albany *Argus*, May 27, 1828.
[2] He quoted it on May 6th.

county committees will forthwith organize and keep up an active correspondence with each other, and look about in time for the elector in their district, bringing forward the most sound, orthodox and popular Jackson man, and make such preparations for the field as to ensure success."

It is hard to see why one of these methods is "the unbiassed will of an intelligent community" any more than the other. The fact is that neither is anything of the sort: one is the method of the party in power; the other the method of the opposition.

Seward's particular activity we cannot follow closely. Auburn was represented at Utica not by Judge Miller who had been in the convention of 1826, but by John H. Beach, like the judge, a former Federalist. The description from the opposition press of the meeting at which he was chosen is worth reading: "A few old Federal leaders [presumably Judge Miller, Mr. Beach and others] with a few half-resisting associates [Seward, of course, and Christopher Morgan] with downcast visage and averted eye, marched slowly up to the hall of justice more like men who were going to be tried for their lives, than like the sons of liberty, flushed with hope and patriotism."[1] Such was the jaundiced view of a political opponent. Seward was not a delegate to this convention but at a young men's convention, held somewhat later, of delegates from all over the state, he was present and was chosen presiding officer.

In spite of all these efforts, Adams was not re-

[1] *Cayuga Patriot.* Quoted in the Albany *Argus*, June 9, 1828.

elected. Probably the best informed politicians hardly expected that he would be. The Richmond *Enquirer* in the previous April published an estimate of the result, which was very nearly accurate. In its estimate of New York, it was exact. There were thirty-six electors, of whom thirty-four were chosen by popular vote in the congressional districts, and two more by the electors so chosen. The *Enquirer* placed the vote at twenty for Jackson and sixteen for Adams, and such was the result. The congressional district of which Auburn was a part favored Jackson.

Four years before Seward might have felt that there was an Adams and Clinton party. But events had shown that though there were friends of Adams and of Clinton and of both, they did not form a party. This was not formed until Clinton's death simplified the situation and made it possible to draw the lines on national issues. The coalition met with defeat, however, and before it could be reorganized it was necessary to consider a new element which for some years became a controlling factor in Seward's political life. This was the Anti-Masonic movement.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANTI-MASONIC MOVEMENT

In the early twenties, the institution of Free-Masonry became very popular in the United States, and especially so in New York. In 1821 was established at Schenectady the Delta Lodge of Perfection. A monument over Brother George Washington was planned. Masonic halls were built, Masonic newspapers were started, and Masonic odes were written. Poinsett, the Minister to Mexico, established a lodge in that country, including some of the principal public men. The year 1825 was full of Masonic interest. In the spring a Grand Lodge of Master-Masons was held at Tammany Hall at which 116 lodges were represented and forty-four charters for new lodges were issued. In the fall, Stephen van Rensselaer was installed as Grand-Master of the State of New York, by De Witt Clinton, Past-Grand-Master, with public ceremonies at Albany. At the opening of the Erie Canal there were "Masonic ceremonies typical of the completion of the great work." A capstone was adjusted in Masonic form and the three emblematic knocks were given, after which "the brethren passed around as if to inspect and verify the truth of the annunciation." [1] In the ceremonies attending the enthusiastic reception of

[1] Levi Beardsley, *Reminiscences*, pp. 213, 214.

Lafayette in 1825, the Masons everywhere had an important share. Seward, who as adjutant in the militia took part in the welcome of Lafayette to Auburn, had not a high appreciation of Free-Masonry, nor did he understand why it should be so prominent on social and political occasions. He was somewhat enlightened by an interview which he witnessed between Lafayette and Gad Bennett, a tinsmith, but the incident left no increase of respect in his mind for the institution. In spite of this, however, there is no doubt that Masonry was very widely spread among the public men of the day. It is said that a majority of those in official life in New York were Masons.[1]

This popularity of the order led to an event of great political import. A man named William Morgan, at the time living in western New York, who seems to have thought he could turn it to his own advantage, prepared an account of certain secrets of Masonry, which he proposed to publish. In the summer of 1826 he offered it to a Mr. Miller, the owner of the Batavia *Advocate*, by whom it was set up and printed. The matter became known to many members of the order, and efforts were made to prevent the publishing of the book. At first, it is said, these were of an entirely lawful and proper nature, but on the failure to purchase or suppress the book, the opposition grew more vigorous. Morgan was several times arrested at the instance of creditors, or those who alleged that they were creditors, but each time he was liberated. Miller's

[1] Hammond, *Political History*, Vol. II, p. 238.

printing-office was attacked and set on fire, but the attempted arson was unsuccessful. Finally a more elaborate plan was carried out. Morgan was arrested upon a warrant from Canandaigua, was taken to that village and confined in the jail. Later, on the night of September 12th, he was put in a closed carriage and driven to Batavia, to Lockport, and finally to Fort Niagara. Here he was kept for a night in an unused magazine, and then carried across to Canada, where it was supposed there would be persons ready to receive him. It appeared that the persons who had been relied upon were unwilling to do this, and he was therefore returned to the American side. Precisely what took place there has never been settled beyond dispute, but it is generally believed that he was thrown into the river and drowned.

All of these facts did not come to public knowledge immediately, nor was it simply the fate of Morgan that so stirred the community as to cause the formation of a new party in state and even in national politics. It was really not so much the particular crime committed against Morgan that aroused public sentiment, as it was the subsequent conviction that, out of devotion to their order, Free-Masons were resolutely and successfully interfering in the administration of justice. Feeling ran very high. It was widely believed in western New York that the personal right to life and liberty had been endangered; that grand juries which should make presentment or indictment of such lawlessness were so influenced by Masonic jurymen, attorneys,

and sheriffs that no action was taken; that even when cases came to trial, important witnesses were spirited away or else withheld their testimony, so that the facts could not be ascertained; that even when the truth was known, juries could not be depended upon to convict. The results of such accusations made themselves felt in many walks of life, but especially in politics.

The exact bearing of these matters, however, on political conditions was not at once clear. Abstractly people might have said that they had no political bearing. Even those who felt deeply the menace to the general peace and justice of a secret organization, such as the enemies of the order represented Free-Masonry to be, were of the opinion that the question did not much concern the state or the national legislative or executive authorities. It was a matter to be pursued in the normal course of justice or by special steps, and a confusion with political issues, they felt, was likely to be more hurtful than useful to the cause of good government. Few, at first, could really have believed that Jackson's being a Mason, while Adams was not, made any great difference in their qualifications for the presidency, any more than the fact of Clinton's being a high Masonic official made him a better or a worse governor. But such views, though sensible enough, naturally would not prevail at a time of popular excitement. When everybody was discussing Masonry, when all sorts of accusations were made, when Masons were resigning from their lodges, it was impossible that the matter should not

have its influence, at least in local politics. In western New York, where the excitement was greatest, it was impossible that Anti-Masonry should not have become an issue. At first people merely agreed not to vote for Masons, or else nominations were made with Masonic considerations in view. This was in the spring of 1827: the town elections proved that Anti-Masonry was a political force.

As this matter became more and more certain, each party began to think how it could best be used. Van Buren interested himself[1] and offered his services as special counsel. Judge Throop pronounced Anti-Masonry "a blessed spirit," and George Throop of Auburn took advantage of his brother's popularity to help himself into the New York Senate.[2] Other friends of Van Buren in the central part of the state came out as Anti-Masons.[3] They were somewhat handicapped, however, by the fact that Jackson was a Mason. The Adams men, on the other hand, were in a better position, for he was not, and was known to have no interest in the institution. It happened that those who first be-

[1] There is in the Van Buren MSS. a very curious letter to him from Younglove of Hudson, an old political friend, advising him to use the opportunity. It is dated Dec. 8, 1820, but this must be an error, perhaps for 1826.

[2] This was later alleged as notorious, and also denied. It seems probable: in October, 1827, the town of Sempronius, the largest in Cayuga County, passed Anti-Masonic resolutions. In the following election, George Throop in a vote smaller than the preceding year made a great increase in the Bucktail majority.

[3] *Evening Journal*, Oct. 27, 1830, not the most impartial authority in such a matter.

came aggressive in bringing the matter to light were Adams men. Prominent among them was Thurlow Weed, then a printer and editor of Rochester. He was a man active in all public affairs, among the first to have any knowledge of the movement and among the first to call for investigation and to serve upon committees that did investigate. He was earnest and devoted in his effort to ferret out and bring to justice the guilty. He was acquainted with Seward, as he was with very many politicians throughout New York, and in the spring of 1827 invited him to join a conference of gentlemen of the western part of the state, who met to consider the political bearing of these subjects. The decision was to the effect that it was very inadvisable that Anti-Masonry should become a matter of politics. Such a course they doubtless held would prevent the attainment of justice. So far political lines had not been drawn, and yet it was hard to overcome the Masonic opposition. The conference parted to repress, as far as possible, the disposition to carry the question into politics. At this time Clinton, who may be thought of as still at the head of his party, was a high Mason. So also, however, was Jackson, and the persistent rumor that Clinton had determined to support Jackson rather put on the same side those who were opposed to Jackson and those opposed to Free-Masonry.

Such is the view presented afterward by Thurlow Weed: "Masonry, as I have before remarked, having sought and found protection in the Jackson party, Anti-Masons naturally affiliated with the

Adams party."[1] But when we consider this view, we must remember that Masons and Anti-Masons were not people outside of the Jackson and the Adams parties: they were parts of those parties. The real question was, not so much whether Masons or Anti-Masons would join one or the other party, but whether the Anti-Masonic issue would disturb the ordinary party relation. In 1827 this question was of minor significance, but in 1828, when the presidential campaign was in full swing, it became very important. Here was an element in western New York which would control votes. What view shall we suppose the political managers would take of it?

The conference just mentioned was mainly made up of men favorable to Adams. Thurlow Weed had been the principal agent in the arrangement by which New York had voted for Adams in 1824. Francis Granger was already well known in politics by three years' service in the Assembly; Albert Tracy was a member of Congress in whom Adams had great personal confidence; G. H. Boughton had been in the Assembly; others had a more local authority, as that of postmaster.[2] Seward's political position we know. He desired to rally the power of the state in the service of internal improvement under Adams and Clinton. He was not a Mason

[1] *Life of Weed*, Vol. I, p. 303.

[2] This of course showed administration politics. In June, 1829, G. H. Boughton of Lockport, Bates Cooke of Lewiston and Trumbull Cary of Batavia (all present at this conference) were removed by the Jacksonian postmaster-general. *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, June 16, 23, 1829.

and of course disapproved of Masonic influence in politics as of the influence of any private aggregation. Still he felt that the matter was not to be dealt with by political means.

The problem before him was one of difficulty. It is true that at the time there was little evidence of Anti-Masonry in Cayuga, but in the fall of 1827 a considerable meeting in the town of Sempronius passed Anti-Masonic resolutions, and as the winter continued it was clear that the "infection," as it was called, was growing. In 1828 the *Cayuga Republican*, the heretofore Clintonian paper, after for some time proclaiming its impartiality but filling its columns with Anti-Masonic material, came out definitely for the party and the Anti-Masons of the county organized. A convention was held at Auburn in June of that year. Seward did not join them. The death of Clinton had deprived him of one political leader, but he was still committed to Adams and was an earnest worker in the Adams organization that was being vigorously pushed throughout the state.[1] During the summer great efforts were everywhere made to get the Anti-Masonic and administration parties together, but each insisted upon a separate state ticket. In Cayuga, Seward tried to make an arrangement with the Anti-Masons, whereby they should nominate candidates acceptable to the Adams men. In this effort he was only too successful: the Anti-Masonic convention, although a different arrangement had

[1] He was one of the county committee. *Cayuga Republican*, July 17th.

been agreed upon, nominated Seward himself for Congress. He was at once hailed as "the master-spirit, who, behind the curtain, pulled the wires and managed the whole transaction."[1] This was correct in part only, but the transaction discredited Seward with his own political friends. The Adams men, however, so far appreciated Seward's position that they endorsed the Anti-Masonic candidate for the state senate, and he was the only man on the ticket to be elected.

With the choice of Jackson, Adams ceased to be a further presidential possibility, and this event, following closely upon the death of Clinton, left Seward entirely without the political leading with which he had begun his public life. Of the former Clintonians, some had always supported Jackson, many were now Clay men. Seward could favor neither. Almost of necessity he became an Anti-Mason and threw himself earnestly into the work of organization. In February, 1829, he was a delegate from Cayuga to the Anti-Masonic convention held at Albany.

This convention settled the status of Anti-Masonry. So far it had been an influence in elections, an influence that each party accused the other of trying to use. Politics had been incidental to its main purpose. So far there might be, as the *Argus* put it, "many honest people who believed that the objects of Anti-Masonry were to vindicate truth and eradicate error." With this convention, however, the Anti-Masons took definite position as a political party

[1] *Cayuga Patriot.*

and naturally became the opponents of the regular Republicans. The *Argus*,[1] in writing of the convention, spoke of the importance of the Morgan question, but condemned severely those who sought to convert it "into a convenient instrument for their own uses, and for the promotion of objects having no sort of connection with the abduction of Morgan, with the principles or practice of Masonry, or with the real intentions of Anti-Masonry." This was of course party language: yet one can hardly feel that Seward was quite content in the new organization, enthusiastic as it certainly was. He disapproved of secret organizations in politics, of Free-Masons, if they interfered in politics, just as much as of the Regency. But he could hardly have tried to persuade himself that this one issue was more essential, even at that time, than the other state and national questions which interested him. Still, in joining the Anti-Masonic movement, he gave up no political principles. The electoral questions which had been prominent when he went into politics had been settled, and settled as he thought rightly. Internal improvement was thoroughly recognized in New York, even though Clinton was dead. Seward still felt the importance of national issues, internal improvement, protection, slavery. But the national campaign was for the moment over: in Anti-Masonry Seward saw a cause with which he entirely sympathized, which was a powerful influence with many men with whom he otherwise agreed, and with whom he had previously acted. It would

[1] Feb. 26, 1829.

have been absurd for him to have held aloof. He could not join the regular Republicans. He did not like to remain with what was left of the administration party, for after the defeat of Adams, this party had shown that it would shortly turn to Henry Clay. Clay was not at all the same man as Adams, at least for Seward, for though committed to internal improvement he was a Southerner and a slaveholder.

The election of 1829 was only for members of the legislature, but the vote for state senators offers us a means of judging the political complexion of the state. We may be sure that Seward studied the returns with care. In New York City the Republican candidates had been successful: there was, however, a very strong opposition of Workingmen, who almost elected their candidate, and a few Anti-Masons. In the second district, consisting of the lower Hudson River counties, the Republican candidate had been chosen with no opposition at all. In the third district, the counties near Albany, the Republicans had polled three times as many votes as their opponents, who were only in part Anti-Masonic. In the fourth, the northern part of the state, the Republicans had succeeded because the National Republicans (as the friends of Henry Clay were here first called) and the Anti-Masons could not agree. In the fifth district, the counties on the Mohawk River, the regular candidate had beaten the combined opposition, and the same was the case in the sixth district, the southern tier of counties. In the seventh district, Seward's own, the vote had

been closer, but Anti-Masonry had been defeated. In the eighth (western) district alone, had Anti-Masonry been completely victorious.

To the student of such returns, two things were clear: if a union with the Workingmen could be made, New York City might be carried, and if a union with the National Republicans could be made, the northern counties could be carried. Then with the ordinary chances in the seventh (Seward's) district, there was hope of electing a state ticket in 1830.

The summer of that year found Seward in the full tide of politics. He was chairman of the Central Corresponding Committee of the county and presumably the author of the address.[1] In August he was a delegate to the state convention, and by this time we can see the standing of Anti-Masonry in the county from the fact that Judge Miller was also a delegate. The convention nominated a state ticket. Francis Granger was named for governor: he had been on the National Republican ticket the year before. Samuel Stevens was named for lieutenant-governor: he was a Workingman. It was hoped thus to conciliate all elements of opposition to the Regency.

The convention went a step farther and elected delegates (Seward among them) to a national convention to be held in Philadelphia, for by this time Anti-Masonry had become a national movement. Even in 1829 the party had organized in Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsyl-

[1] *Cayuga Republican*, July 28, 1830.

vania, Ohio, and Michigan: now it was felt that the national character would be strengthened by a convention. It was desired by many that a presidential nomination should be made, but the New York delegation was entirely against such an act, for it would have alienated the National Republicans, who supported Clay, who was a Mason. The convention contented itself with a statement of principles in an address.[1]

On his return from Philadelphia Seward found that, at the suggestion of Thurlow Weed, he had been nominated by the Anti-Masons of the seventh district to the state Senate.

The Senate at that time was a body of thirty-two members, one being chosen annually for a four-year term from each of eight districts. The seventh district had been considered generally Republican, though in 1824 John C. Spencer had been elected on the Clintonian ticket. In 1828 Hiram Mather had been elected on the Anti-Masonic ticket, but the next year the eccentricity had been corrected. Cayuga County was regarded as being safely for the Regency: the influence of Judge Throop (this year the candidate for governor), Judge Powers, George Throop, and Nathaniel Garrow was such that they made a little junto of their own, whose followers were called "juntocrats" in the opposition papers. The senatorial vote in the county after the constitution of 1822 shows a Republican

[1] *Proceedings of the United States Anti-Masonic Convention*, Sept. 11, 1830.

majority which, in the year 1829, had increased to 1,749.[1]

This hostile majority Seward had to bring over to his side. He had in his favor personal popularity, a growing enthusiasm for Anti-Masonry, the united support of the National Republicans, and possible help from the Workingmen. These latter appear to have been an element worth considering: at the Workingmen's convention held at Salina that year there were more delegates from Cayuga County than from any other, and most of them from Auburn. The Workingmen of this county made nominations for the Assembly but none for the Senate. The result showed their importance: the Anti-Masonic candidates for the Assembly were defeated, but Seward succeeded in getting a majority of seventeen. This change of 1,766 votes in his own county gave him a comfortable majority in the district.

The result in the state at large was not so fortunate. The Anti-Masons carried the whole west, the

[1]

	Bucktail or Regency Candidate	*Clintonian, Adams or Anti-Masonic*	*Total*	*Bucktail or Regency Majority*
1823	2,170	2,027	4,197	143
1824	2,942	3,047	5,989	—105
1825	2,849	3,237	6,086	—388
1826	3,214	3,007	6,221	207
1827	3,430	2,074	5,504	1,356
1828	2,952	1,951	4,903	1,001
1829	3,870	2,121	5,991	1,749
1830	3,634	3,651	7,285	— 17

These figures are from the "Official Canvass" published in the papers each year.

eighth, seventh, and sixth districts, but the second, third, and fourth came out against them with heavy majorities. These had been the real fighting-grounds. The fourth would have voted for Granger could he have got the National Republican vote, and the third might have done so too. As it was, he was beaten by 8,000 in a vote of 250,000.

With this election Seward made a definite step in political life. So far he had been a public-spirited citizen, desirous that his ideas and principles should prevail, and taking such action as the political conditions of the time allowed, to carry his ideas into practical form. Now, however, he was one of the public men of the state, a member of the upper house of the legislature, chosen for four years to make the laws under which the state government should be administered, one of the successful leaders of a growing political party. This position had been gained by no easy steps. He had begun his public life as the earnest follower of two great men, who, in his view, were the embodiment of the principles essential to the progress of the country,—Clinton in the state and Adams in the nation. They stood for the great principle of internal improvement, or as we should now call it, transportation, in Seward's mind, the fundamental necessity of the day. The tariff, the bank, even the franchise,—none of these questions to him seems to have been of equal importance with transportation, at the moment by highway and canal, and soon by railway. In his political considerations, that point was the main thing: on it depended not merely the fortunes

of Auburn, nor even of western New York, but of the new West, then only beginning to be settled. But though the matter of transportation was of prime importance, there was another which in its practical bearings came even more pressingly to notice; namely, the question of political methods. The state, as Seward saw it, and the United States too, was governed by a comparatively small group of men: it was a democracy in name only. The elective franchise meant no more than the power to ratify the choice of the political managers. So long as caucus nominations prevailed, even the advances in broadening the franchise and lessening the appointing power would be insufficient to give the people in general the direction of their own affairs. So Seward was against Van Buren, the Regency, and the official Republican party of his day. To oppose them he had followed Clinton till he seemed about to join them; he had followed Adams till he had been irretrievably beaten; and now he was profiting by the example of his political friends in using the political power generated by the Morgan outrage for the cause of good government in state and nation.

He was now quite well to do; he was not rich, but he supported himself and his family comfortably, and was also able to help various friends and relations less fortunate, or less able, than himself. He had at this time two sons, Augustus and Frederick, and lived in a pleasant house opposite the home of his father-in-law, which he had purchased the year before. On his election to the Senate, however, he was compelled to change his plans. He decided to

close his new house and to go to Albany alone. His wife and children joined the household of Judge Miller and he started for the state capital.

CHAPTER V

STATE SENATOR

On a Wednesday morning in December, 1830, between daylight and sunrise, Seward took the coach for Albany. The way led over the Northern Turnpike to Syracuse, which he reached at five in the afternoon. As was usual at the time, the political magnates dropped into the hotel bar-room to gossip with the stage passengers. Seward was surrounded by local politicians who received him warmly and at once asked him to write an address for the convention which they were about to hold on New Year's Day. This he consented to do, and stayed over night for the purpose. On Thursday a coach came along in the afternoon and in it he had a fatiguing ride of sixteen hours to Utica. Here he stopped for breakfast and pressed on in a hard storm, going down by the river on the Mohawk Turnpike,[1] through Herkimer and Little Falls, by Sprakers' Tavern to Fonda. He got a good start on Saturday, and without stopping at the college at Schenectady, drove into Albany at seven in the evening, well tired with four days' traveling. He put up at the Eagle Tavern, the great political gathering place, where for the present he was given a room with George H.

[1] Which had been "built in an expeditious and unsubstantial manner of the material found along the line." Benton's *Herkimer County*, p. 214.

Boughton, an outgoing Anti-Masonic senator from the eighth district.

He had plenty to do even before his legislative duties began. He had to look after some law business in the Supreme Court, a number of old friends to see, and much Anti-Masonic politics to talk over. Of the leaders of the party Thurlow Weed was now in Albany as editor of the *Evening Journal*, just beginning its second year. In the Senate there was an Anti-Masonic minority of seven: William H. Maynard and H. F. Mather had been elected two years before, Albert F. Tracy the previous year, while with Seward had come Charles W. Lynde, Trumbull Cary, and Philo C. Fuller. With the exception of Maynard all were from the western part of the state. In the Assembly there was about the same proportion of Anti-Masons, also, in the main, from the western counties, led by John C. Spencer. Three prominent Anti-Masons at this time were not in Albany: Francis Granger had just been defeated in his campaign for governor, and Frederick Whittlesey and Bates Cook were in Congress. Seward, though almost the youngest, was already one of the party leaders. Weed was the man for planning and counsel; Maynard and Tracy, Spencer and Granger were prominent in the legislature. But it was usually Seward who drew up the party addresses, the resolutions, the statements of principle.

As he looked out into the political world, he felt that it was very large and that he was very small. And yet there was then in the state no man in pub-

lic life who achieved greater fame than his. Van Buren and Marcy, Silas Wright and John A. Dix may be compared with him, but not to his disadvantage. In the roll of the Senate and Assembly there were no names beside his own that will be generally remembered to-day, except those of Millard Fillmore and perhaps N. P. Tallmadge and J. C. Spencer. Yet Seward at the beginning of a great career felt diffident. "Every other member of the Senate, in my view, had the knowledge and ability that the station required. On the other hand, I had a painful sense of incompetency."

In the Senate, the two leaders of the Regency forces, as they were currently called, at least by Seward and his friends, were Nathaniel S. Benton and N. P. Tallmadge. Each had naturally a confidence that Seward lacked, for each spoke and acted as the representative of a strong majority, of a dominant political party,—indeed, of the people of the state and of the United States. But there were other men who doubtless had a character and a confidence that made their impression. Levi Beardsley, of Otsego County, had been brought to New York as a child, and carried through the wilderness to begin life on the frontier.[1] He was a sensible lawyer, and a public man of character, who in his youth had built log fences, wrestled with the county and fought wolves. Alvin Bronson, of Oswego, was another practical man,[2] a merchant in a little town, a "prominent citizen" in a small

[1] See his very interesting *Reminiscences*.
[2] See Hammond, Vol. II, p. 322.

community, but a person of reading and thought. Such men are sensible lawmakers under our American conditions: it was natural that Seward, the best educated of all, should have felt that they had something that he had not. He had to develop and show his powers; in following the proceedings of the Senate one sees that he was at first a negligible quantity. In his first session he was placed on the Committee on Enrolled Bills; in the next he was also placed on the Committee on States Prisons, because of his home in Auburn. His activity consisted largely in presenting petitions or remonstrances from the seventh district, reporting enrolled bills from the committee, acting as chairman when the Senate went into Committee of the Whole. The affairs of the Senate were carried on without much regard to Seward, or indeed, to the Anti-Masonic minority. In the session of 1831 he introduced two bills; one on the routine of the Court of Chancery, and one on the public records of the state. The next year he introduced two more; one on the jurisdiction of surrogates, and the other on the routine of the Supreme Court. He offered amendments and resolutions; one on the militia, for instance, and one on colonial documents. His minor legal reforms were carried, but his other ideas met with opposition. Still he continued to think broadly on public affairs, not merely as an Anti-Mason, not merely as representing the seventh district. His militia amendment was a matter of real concern to him. He had been interested in the service ever since he had been in Auburn: at this

time, like several of his colleagues, he was a colonel and was sometimes so called.

He took the occasion of a bill introduced into the Senate to express himself. Feeling very diffident and hardly daring to open his mouth among such capable and eloquent persons as surrounded him, he felt that he must choose something that he was familiar with, and speak on it, or else sit absolutely still. He therefore prepared a careful speech, which may be read in his *Works*. With this beginning he continued more easily, beside taking definite position on party affairs, to use his influence in various matters of a non-political nature. Thus he warmly seconded the efforts making to improve the school system, the plan for publishing the documentary history of the state, the betterment of prison discipline, the establishment of a separate penitentiary for women. He also pressed several plans which though at first view non-political, were found to have some connection with interests at the capital. He advocated the abolition of imprisonment for debt, of which one result was that it cut down the revenue of the state printer by discontinuing the advertisements of insolvent debtors. He opposed the bills for increasing the salaries of higher judicial officers, but found that this plan, as well as his own project for the surrogates, also had a political element.

He was, of course, an active politician, and a day-to-day view of his position shows us the Anti-Masonic senator from the seventh district, one of a small minority, with eyes fixed on the movements

of the opposing party. When he offered a motion to inquire into the conduct of the state salt springs in Onondaga County, he saw with pleasure that he "had thrown the Regency camp into confusion." When Adjutant-General Dix made a call upon him, Seward noted that he was the third member of the Regency who had visited him. Later a Regency man, wanting Seward to vote for the Penn Yan Bank, tried to play on whatever feeling may have been between himself and his fellow townsman and senator, George Throop.[1] So he was much interested in the resentment called forth by General Root's attack on the Regency in Congress, observing that the factions of the other side hated each other more than they did the Anti-Masons. From day to day he noted talks with his Anti-Masonic colleagues and their views of the other party.[2]

But though these minor matters of partisan politics were interesting enough to mention in a letter to his wife, they were in reality only ripples in the main course of life. Public events in these years were directed by the Democratic party without much relation to Anti-Masonry, nor did the Anti-Masons themselves have any positive issue to insist upon in variation. The legislation of the first years that Seward served in the Senate was directed mainly to two points;—the canals and railroads, and the banks.

The first of these matters was to him all-im-

[1] They ran against each other the next year for county supervisor, and Seward was beaten.

[2] These notes will all be found in the *Life*, Vol. I, *passim*.

portant. Improved means of transportation was what he commonly thought of under the term then current of internal improvements; first roads, then canals, then railroads. At this time the canal system had long been the chief feature in any internal improvement policy. The development of the highways had not been pressed, except in the case of a great state road through the southern counties where a canal was impracticable. The immense success of the Erie Canal, however, had led to plans for a good many subsidiary "lateral" canals, of which one of the least important should connect Auburn (on a hill) with the Erie. This particular canal, however, though Seward was among those who planned and urged it, never came to anything. The project most in the public eye was the Chenango Canal, which, for several sessions, served as a battle-ground for opposing parties. Neither objected to a canal system, but while the Anti-Masons representing the western part of the state advocated a liberal construction policy, the Republican party in general was very conservative, holding to the idea that no canal should be built unless it could be counted upon to pay its cost of construction in a definite time; or at least, to be a direct source of revenue.

But interest in the canals was being eclipsed by the new inventions. During Seward's first year in Albany, the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad between Albany and Schenectady was completed and put into operation. At that and the following sessions, there were applications for charters from

several new companies, generally on lines to the north and west of Albany, while great public interest was manifested in a line from the lower Hudson to Lake Erie. The value of the railway as an internal improvement at first appeared much the same as that of the canal, but circumstances put the two upon a different basis. From the standpoint of the moment, it was held that as the canal was already built, the railway should not be allowed to interfere with it. Looked at more scientifically, in course of time it appeared that the railway was a very different sort of highway. A canal was a public highway like a turnpike: any one might travel on it who would pay the tolls. A railway, on the other hand, could not be open to general traffic because of the particular kind of locomotion employed. At first this was not obvious, since all kinds of locomotion were used on the railroads: horse-power, hand-power, steam-power, even the power of the wind, were all tried. But as the steam-locomotive soon proved itself the only practicable means, the character of the railway changed. It could not be built by the state and used as a turnpike: it must belong to a private company. And at once arose the question of the rights to be given to such a company. Seward's view was very impractical and yet had a sounder foundation than that finally adopted. He would have had the state own the roads and allow any one to use them.[1] The plan was visionary, yet in so far as he felt that the state ought to keep some right of property in the railroad, he was far wiser

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 94.

than those who would have granted valuable franchises to companies, for no return except the immediate advantage in transportation.

But these matters had also their political bearing, and Seward's views and votes were likely to be influenced in that direction. The Chenango Canal was a great political means: it had meant thousands of votes for Francis Granger its champion; if there had been two Chenango Canals he would have been elected governor. Yet Seward could not bring himself entirely to favor it, and in this respect he was wise, for the waterway was probably the least useful and profitable of all the lateral canals which had been planned by Clinton, and the one which should have been last constructed. As to the railway bills, Seward felt that the interests of the state for the future should be more definitely cared for than was commonly the case in the charters that came to the Senate, and we find him offering amendments which were generally voted down.

The next important subject for legislation was the bank question. This matter was one which could not be separated from the more general political considerations of the time: men's thinking on bank questions was necessarily connected with their view of Andrew Jackson, then in his first term and a candidate for reëlection. People either took sides for or against the United States Bank from their view of Jackson, or took sides for or against Jackson from their view of the bank. It was natural that the state of New York should be against the bank, partly because it was thought that so powerful an

institution in the city of Philadelphia was contrary to the commercial interests of New York City, and partly because it was thought that if the United States did not deposit its money in a national bank, it must deposit with state banks. Hence came a great number of applications for bank charters which the Regency was inclined to grant, and the Anti-Masons to reject or restrict.

Otherwise there was no immediate cause for action. The charter of the United States Bank ran until 1836 and there seemed no obvious step called for in the New York legislature by the President's opposition to its renewal, nor even to his subsequent withdrawal of the deposits. But the Democratic leaders of the state were in the main followers of Van Buren, and so were earnest Jackson men. It was natural that they should wish to endorse the action of the administration: resolutions were therefore offered in the legislature.[1] In the Senate Maynard opposed the administration policy with great vigor, and Seward took the opportunity to declare himself at length. By this time he had become recognized as a man to be considered. The Senate of that day was a small body and the usual style of address was almost colloquial, but on this occasion the audience was increased by a crowd of spectators and Seward delivered an elaborate speech. If the Democratic

[1] April 11 and 12, 1831, the Senate discussed and passed the Assembly resolutions affirming that the charter ought not to be renewed, and the next year, Jan. 24th, 27th, 31st, and Feb. 4th, resolutions of their own to the same effect. On these last Seward spoke at length, but the speech has not been republished from the papers.

party fears a great bank aristocracy, he asked, why is it so eager to charter state banks which create a small bank aristocracy in every part of the state? Seward's position on the President's policy was that it led to the creation of state banks, and this seemed a dangerous political step. The Regency, he believed, owned the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank of Albany: their connections formed banks in the smaller towns. Then by means of their influence with the canal commissioners, the bank commissioners, and the comptroller of the state, they managed the distribution of the "enormous revenues collected from the canals, and the surplus of those revenues, now amounting to a million and a half of dollars."[1] He saw in this combination a possibility disastrous to good government.

It was by these speeches more than by any other influence that Seward began to make his reputation with the state at large. He was not an "original" Anti-Mason, nor could he ever speak on Anti-Masonry with the real enthusiasm of Francis Granger and others. Moreover, the ideas of Anti-Masonry did not arouse the whole state. On the bank question it was different. The results of the bank policy made themselves apparent everywhere.

[1] These were current opposition charges now hard to prove or disprove. They represent beliefs in Seward's mind and certainly possibilities in matters of fact. The Mechanics and Farmers' Bank of Albany had for a president Benjamin Knower, a gentleman of great political wisdom and independence, but always reckoned as one of the Regency. The comptroller at this time was Silas Wright. The canal and bank commissioners were elected by a legislature that had long had a Regency majority.

Whether they felt strongly on the matter or not, the people of every village had to know something by experience of the national and state handling of the financial question. The administration policy was bitterly opposed by many, and those who opposed it looked to Seward as their champion in the Senate. In 1834 he delivered speeches that were long remembered, on the removal of the deposits and the six million dollar loan. Some years afterward one of his hearers wrote: "The lobby and gallery were filled. It had been whispered that the eloquent Seward—the youngest man in the Senate—was to make a speech, and an unparalleled concourse of ladies and gentlemen were present. It was our task to report his speech. We followed him through his beautiful *début* and kept close upon his back while repelling some of the minor libels of the miserable demagogues who sought to crush him—but when he launched away into the ocean of eloquence —when he poured out, as it were, in a stream of living light, his patriotic indignation at the base hirelings who sought to traduce his principles and the principles of those with whom he acted, our pen refused to do its office. We hung upon the lips of the speaker, as did all present—even his enemies—and were lost in admiration at the power of intellect, and the sublime eloquence of truth." [1] Even with large allowance here for eulogistic rhetoric and political objects, we cannot fail to detect in these words the profound impression made by

[1] Rochester *Telegram* quoted in the *Evening Journal*, Sept. 19, 1838.

Seward upon the public opinion of the state. When we remember that this triumph of eloquence was achieved by one who fifteen years before could spoil an excellent speech by his tame delivery, who twenty-five years afterward still spoke with husky voice and dry and didactic manner,[1] we shall see that it was by no superficial power nor magnetic fascination that Seward impressed his hearers. Now, as long afterward, it was that he clearly stood as the champion of ideas which they deeply felt themselves.

These matters seem to us to-day much more interesting,—and indeed really were far more significant,—than the points of party policy. As one reads the record of Seward's legislative experience, one is likely to forget that he was an Anti-Mason. During his first session occurred important trials on the Niagara circuit; during this session and the next there was much interest in politics on account of the Anti-Masonic National Convention and its nomination for President. But from day to day in the Senate there was little that had anything to do with Anti-Masonry: other matters were much more essential. Seward acted with a minority of seven or sometimes of eight. They were all from the western part of the state except Maynard of the fifth district. On strictly party questions there were rarely any to act with them. On matters where the party lines were not too closely drawn, they sometimes

[1] J. S. Pike in his report of Seward's speech in the New York *Tribune*, March 2, 1860. See also page 238 for Carl Schurz's mention of Seward's eloquence in 1854.

gained the support of one or two of the senators from New York or the southern tier of counties. But almost always they had against them a solid block of the senators from the Hudson River counties and the northern part of the state. Here was the main strength of the Regency, and not unnaturally, for these were the home counties of the men who composed it. They formed a solid, almost unvarying body, and with certain organization men like George Throop of the seventh, and Benton of the fifth district, they were practically sure of victory.

Anti-Masonic politics were undoubtedly too difficult a matter even for the wisdom of Maynard, the political sense of Thurlow Weed, and the brilliant cleverness of Seward, not to mention the others. They had not only difficulties of circumstance but of system as well. As we have seen, the political system of New York maintained order by a partisan distribution of offices by and with the advice of the judges of the Supreme Court whose judicial duties carried them everywhere in the state.[1] This general plan was further effected by a careful use of newspapers which were held to accountability by the distribution of public advertising, and of banks which were managed by a deposit of public money. Weed and Seward and those who acted with them had no offices, nor judges, nor pub-

[1] It was during Seward's second session that Marcy made the famous declaration of the spoils system in the United States Senate. Of course he was no more responsible for the system than any one else, though he had done more than most by means of it.

lic advertising, nor public money. They had to hold their friends together in other ways. Thurlow Weed himself went far to overcome most of the deficiencies of the old system. He had in earlier days traveled all over the state as a journeyman printer, always making it his business to meet the prominent men of every town. He had since then constantly gone about on political errands so that his political acquaintance was now very large. The difficulty of having no appointive offices to promise he made up by suggesting nominations to elective offices, and seeing at conventions that his suggestions were carried out. He could not manage to create a network of newspapers dependent upon himself for their own advancement, but in the *Evening Journal* he did a great deal to solidify the anti-Regency sentiment. If only from necessity, he was certainly much more of a real Democrat in his management of politics than the political machine bearing that name. Seward's share in this matter was by no means so great as Weed's, yet in one point it was more important. Weed carried on the old system as well as he could: his ideal of politics was a system of groups of public men in different places who acted together, and as friends of one or another more prominent than the rest. Seward, however, developed a far better and more permanent political means; namely, the party committee. He did not devise this means: it had long been in use. But he himself had been for some time chairman of the Cayuga County committee, and from the detailed accounts he gave to Weed it is clear that he devel-

oped the workings of the committee in a manner then quite new.

As the next presidential election drew on, the political situation became more and more difficult. There was a National Anti-Masonic Convention at Baltimore which nominated William Wirt for the presidency.[1] The state convention nominated Granger and Stevens again, and electors pledged to Wirt. The National Republican convention accepted these nominations and it was at once charged that there had been a bargain. The National Republicans were to help elect Granger and Stevens, and in return the Anti-Masonic electors were to vote, not for William Wirt, but for Henry Clay. There was some antecedent possibility for such a course: if the Anti-Masons and the National Republicans could combine, they had a chance of defeating Jackson. But if there was to be a coalition, it could be better made on Clay than on Wirt, because Clay had some strength in several states where Anti-Masonry flourished, whereas in the states where Clay was strongest, there was no Anti-Masonry at all. So it was probably apparent to the politicians that if the coalition could carry New York, it would be advisable that the state should cast its electoral vote for Clay. Unfortunately for any arrangement, Henry Clay was a high and adhering Mason, and if Anti-Masonry meant anything in principle, it meant that such men should be excluded from office. The Democratic papers of course charged Thurlow Weed

[1] Seward was a delegate, and so was his father, whose connection with Anti-Masonry I have been unable to trace.

with a bargain in which all the Anti-Masonic electors (except John C. Spencer) should vote for Clay, and, indeed, it is not improbable that Clay expected this course to be taken. Seward in his Autobiography[1] says that he himself expected that the Anti-Masonic electors (if chosen) would vote for Wirt if he could thereby be elected: but if it should appear that Wirt could not be elected, the vote of New York was to be cast for Clay. In other words, the question of Anti-Masonic principle had vanished and the question was one merely of party politics: Wirt, if he could be elected, and if not, Clay. Seward does not say, what must have been clear to him at the time, that there was no chance at all for Wirt, and a very good chance for Clay. If the coalition had carried every state in which Anti-Masonry was held in any large degree of favor, namely, New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, they might have had 131 votes for Wirt out of 286. But if they had agreed upon Clay in all those states where there was a strong Clay party, they might have had 156 votes, and Clay would have been elected. It is not probable that men of the political acumen of Seward and Weed had any idea that Wirt could be successful. This could have come about only by the Clay party deliberately handing over to Wirt states which had no interest at all in Anti-Masonry. Seward had slight connection with the actual campaign: he probably saw that Anti-Masonry was practically impossible. There were few who really believed

[1] Page 100.

its fundamental principle to be a matter of political importance.

The result was a worse defeat than might have been expected. On appealing to the state on an issue which was really no issue at all, and which half of the party leaders believed was not a matter of politics, the Anti-Masonic party was beaten again. Granger had 5,000 more votes against him than before; only one senator in the eight districts was elected; the minority in the Assembly was two-thirds of what it had been. The Jackson electors were chosen by a large majority.

It was a hard blow and gave a setback to all hopes. The next year Seward saw less of politics than usual, for at the close of the session he sailed for Europe with his father. The tour was of great advantage to Seward: he eagerly made use of the opportunity to broaden his horizon and to learn by comparison and contrast something more of the true value of the American institutions and ways of life that so absorbed his mind. He was, of course, especially interested in the debates in the House of Commons. There he saw O'Connell and heard him burst out in a discussion on the state of the Irish Church, and there he found himself in a position to have a little talk with some of the members, though he had no time for long observation. He enjoyed Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and turned homeward by way of Paris, where, in the Chamber of Deputies, he looked eagerly for Lafayette. He had not only a chance to see Lafayette in the Chamber, but was most cordially invited to make him a visit

at his country-place at LaGrange. This experience long remained in his memory. Lafayette died the next year, and it was always a source of great satisfaction to Seward to remember that he had been able to see him and know him in the personal intimacy of his home.

Seward and his father returned to America just in time to take part in an election in which Anti-Masonry was again defeated, and that more definitely than the year before.

CHAPTER VI

THE RISE OF THE WHIG PARTY

WHEN Seward returned to Albany in the fall of 1833, to attend the Court of Errors, he took rooms at first in Congress Hall. At the foot of the stairs, as he wrote, was the ladies' parlor, at this time bearing upon its door the card of Martin Van Buren. The Vice-President was making a short visit to his friends in Albany, and a constant succession of callers came to welcome him and exchange political views. Fewer were those who went up-stairs to call upon the senator from the seventh district. He had not so many political friends in Albany as in previous winters. Maynard was dead, and the loss to Seward had been very great. Maynard had been the leader of the little Anti-Masonic minority, a man of intellect and eloquence. Tracy was still in the Senate; indeed, he had just been reëlected. But even before this time he had fallen under the influence of Van Buren, and had become convinced that Anti-Masonry had accomplished all that it could ever achieve as a political party. He proposed, therefore, to support the bank policy of the administration. Weed and Seward could not follow him in this, though they had slight hopes of Anti-Masonry. It was still strong in the western part of the state, but they felt that the party should not be kept alive merely that a few friends might gain reëlec-

tions. Granger and Stevens had been beaten the year before by majorities much increased over 1830, while the minority in the Assembly had dwindled almost to nothing at all. In the Senate Seward could count only on Cary who had been elected with him, the gloomy Birdsall, and John Griffin, all from the faithful eighth district. The outlook was dark: Seward at times felt that Maynard had died fortunately. "The ruin of the political interests which he had so much at heart would have consigned him to unmerited and insupportable obscurity." Doubtless if Seward had gone down-stairs some evening for a pleasant talk with Mr. Van Buren, he might have dispersed many of the clouds that surrounded him. But although he had much personal ambition, he had also enthusiasm for the right: as he said himself about this time, he saw that the latter consideration stood in the way of the former.

When it became clear that the Anti-Masonic party was gaining no new strength and losing much of its old, its representatives at Albany resolved that, so far as they were concerned, the party tie should be dissolved and that every member should be at liberty to follow his own judgment. With this action the party ceased to be a definite factor in New York politics. There still remained, especially in the western counties, a strong Anti-Masonic feeling, and in some sections of the state the name was retained in the local elections of this year. In other states, also, the party, or at least the party name, lingered on. But with this consultation the organization in New York was dissolved.

Whatever we may think of Anti-Masonry itself, a general view of state politics indicates it to have been one of the many efforts against the dominant faction of the Democratic-Republican party. From the time of the end of the Federalist party to the establishment of the (later) Republican party, New York politics shows a series of radical attempts to break the power of the conservative element. The Clintonians, the People's party, the Anti-Masons, the Whigs, the Locofocos, the Barnburners, show the opposition cohering about some man or some measure. No one of these groups was permanent, largely because no one united enough people or presented a broad enough issue. The practical bond of union was generally hostility to the old-line Republican (later the Democratic) machine. That, in fact, was Seward's real position for a long time. But what might seem merely a factious negative position was in his case a positive policy. He consistently opposed the Democratic-Republican party, especially as represented by Van Buren and Jackson, because he believed internal improvements to be necessary to the development of the country. The dominant party opposed the principle, sometimes openly both in nation and in state; sometimes indirectly as when they favored slavery, which Seward held to be the great enemy of national development, and when they destroyed the United States Bank without providing any substitute except the state banking systems. These were the foundation articles in Seward's creed: to maintain them he was by turns a Clintonian, an Adams man,

an Anti-Mason. These names were but names (sometimes not even that): his own political principles, however, remained much the same throughout.

He had at this time still a year to serve in the Senate and in spite of the gloomy political view, it was not an unpleasant year. His position was in some respects more advantageous than it had been before, for he was now entirely free from any political restraints except those of circumstances, his constituents, and his own conscience. On the other hand, he stood before the legislature and the people, not as a free lance or an adventurer, but as a working politician like anybody else. Three years' activity had not only increased his political powers; it had made them generally recognized. It was but natural that, as he notes himself, his colleagues listened in a kindly manner to whatever he presented to them, and that save on party questions they adopted any just views which he advocated.

The political aspects of the winter are therefore of a more general character than before. One great interest was the bank controversy, which in the phase of the removal of the deposits had led to strong Jacksonian resolutions in the New York legislature. Seward spoke strongly against them, and his political position is clearly shown by the fact that on what should have been a definite party question, he spoke for a minority of five in the Senate and nine in the Assembly. In like manner he challenged a vote on the resolutions approving Jackson's veto of the public land bill of 1834. The

session was shorter than usual and by April the Assembly was ready for adjournment. Seward's legislative career was at an end, though he had still some duties in attending the Court of Errors.

One pleasing feature of this relief was that he would now have leisure for his family and time for his law practice, both of which had suffered from neglect by his long seasons of absence at Albany. The interruption of family life he had felt keenly. He had at first lived at the Eagle Tavern, the great political hostelry of the time, and his letters and journals show his constant desire for the companionship of his wife and his two little boys. In Auburn, even though he was often busy from morning till night, he yet had odd moments that made a great difference in the working day. In Albany he felt lonely. The lack was corrected to some degree by bringing his family with him for the session, in the last half of his term. But he was always glad to get back to Auburn and now he looked forward to a long season of quiet work and peaceful domestic life.

Such anticipations were not to be realized, as, indeed, they rarely are in actual life. Seward had no real idea of retiring from politics, or any serious desire to do so. Doubtless the difficulties and annoyances incident to his position led him to feel a certain relief when the press of responsibility was removed: he looked forward with delight to unaccustomed freedom. But such freedom could not last: his political ideas were as firm as ever, and even the success of the opposing party, which

gave him a moment's relief, demanded fresh exertions. Another opportunity was supplied by the sudden gathering of a new political party, under the name of Whig.

The name was not absolutely new even in its present application.[1] It was used in the elections of this spring by those in New Hampshire and Connecticut, who wished to give a popular aspect to their resistance to Jacksonism. They were the patriots, and being so, like their forefathers of sixty years before, they took the title of Whig, and stigmatized supporters of the "Old Hero," whom they held to be hirelings of the tyrant, as Tories. Naturally the statesmen of the dominant party were not forward to accept a nickname, which at that time had a bad significance in America. They had an excellent name—Democrat—which they were not to be wiled into giving up. Their opponents might circle around them with all sorts of ingenious and seductive appellations, but they held fast to the best political name that American parties have ever had.

The name Whig, however, was good enough for the moment, even if the Democrats would not play at being Tories. In New York City the municipal election was held in the month of April, while the legislature was still in session.[2] It was an occasion

[1] It occurs in the political literature of the previous decade, sometimes even being applied to Jacksonian ideas and principles. It was not uncommon as the name of a newspaper.

[2] We can date the use of the name "Whig" with curious definiteness. Philip Hone in his *Diary* speaks of Gulian C. Verplanck, on March 19th, as nominated by a "committee of National Republicans": on April 8th, he is the candidate of the "Whig party."

of intense excitement. It lasted for three days and included great activity in voting, serious riots, and packed meetings to protest in the interest of order. As a result, the Whig candidate for mayor was beaten by 180 votes, but the Whigs gained a majority in the board of aldermen and assistants. In spite of the loss of their leader, this was considered a great victory, and was everywhere celebrated by those opposed to the administration.

Nowhere was the matter more eagerly taken up than at Albany. Almost in a day Seward had a party again. The Whig party was a means of political expression and immediately Thurlow Weed, Granger, Whittlesey, Seward, and other old Anti-Masons gathered to consider the situation.

So as he went home to Auburn, Seward was again in political harness. He at once saw the direction in which he was to be useful: it was his duty to present and explain the principles of the organization. He himself was not much pleased with the name "Whig,"[1] and would have preferred another with a wider significance, that expressed in a way the principles for which the party stood. But not much good had come from the name "Anti-Masonic," however accurately expressive, and though Seward probably had no very serious belief that he was representing the Whigs of 1776, yet the designation aroused enthusiasm and he was ready to accept it. The main point was somehow to rally the opposition throughout the state, and put into political form the forces that would work for in-

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 155.

ternal improvement and the development of the country.

The first steps of immediate importance were the arranging for a convention which should nominate candidates for the fall election and determining the best candidates for the convention to nominate. The managing committee met and decided upon Jesse Buel for governor, and it seemed that Seward himself would be a good candidate for lieutenant-governor. It was Seward's task to present Mr. Buel's name to the public and to the Whig party in such a way as to do most for success at the polls. He had but just prepared a statement when it appeared that Mr. Buel, who had consented to run for the office, had lately expressed himself in approval of Jackson's policy in regard to the bank and the withdrawal of the deposits. This made him impossible, but another candidate was hard to find. Francis Granger, who had twice been the Anti-Masonic nominee, was now assured of an election to Congress, which he preferred to only a chance of being governor. Mr. Verplanck, who had made such a brilliant run for mayor in New York City, was an obvious possibility but he declined to allow his name to be used. When the news of the convention reached Auburn, the citizens were astonished to find that their fellow-townsman Seward had been nominated. He had not even been mentioned as a candidate, but Thurlow Weed the week before had privately presented the name to his political friends, and the convention had readily taken it up.

The campaign was most active not only in New

York, but everywhere else. The fiction of the Whig party being a band of patriots was sustained by liberty-caps: their opponents showed their Tory spirit by violent riots. The Whigs rejoined in the same manner, and often surpassed them. Each side upbraided the other with being despicable hirelings; one of a despotic tyrant, the other of a corrupt aristocracy. Seward remained chiefly in Auburn. His nomination was well received by his party, though without enthusiasm: "Our candidate is twenty-six, has red hair, and a long nose," announced the New York *Times*. "The *Argus* is yet silent," wrote Seward on September 19th: this was doubtless because he had not read the issue of September 13th in which the Whig nomination was pronounced to be that of "John Doe and Richard Roe." In spite of this modest beginning the campaign became animated, and the *Argus* soon broke its silence with most vigorous presentations of Seward's political course.[1] The day before the election it made an earnest appeal to the intelligent voter: "Was there ever such a chameleon candidate presented to the people! In the west he is an Anti-Mason; in the east he is the great champion of the bank without regard to Anti-Masonry; in the north and along the canal he is decidedly opposed to the Erie Railroad which is represented as a rival work, designed to divert the business from the canals; in the south, his letter [approving of the

[1] Such things are instructive reading. Thus the *Argus* of Nov. 1st accuses Seward of calling himself a Clintonian and a friend of internal improvements, while he voted against the Chenango Canal, on which see p. 92.

New York and Erie] is to gull the people into his support by his professions for their interests." A little knowledge of Seward's career shows that except for the third point which is merely a perversion of what was a real interest, these different positions were all natural developments of Seward's principles. "In nothing is he consistent but in opposition to the Democratic party, and in his devotion to the great corrupting monopoly, the United States Bank."[1] This too had a color of fact: Seward was a consistent opposer of the Regency, and as he thought a national bank of some kind was a necessity to the interests of the country, he was earnest in its support.

The campaign was short but vigorous, and at the end Seward and his friends hoped for success. Such was not the result: Marcy was chosen by 10,000 majority, and the Whigs elected but one senator and a few assemblymen and members of Congress.

The hopes aroused in the spring had not been realized. Seward was now unequivocally out of politics and could take as much time as he wished for his family and his law practice. There was, however, one important difference. In the winter he had seemed to be left to himself politically by the melting away of Anti-Masonry. As a new winter began, he found himself once more one of the leaders of a party,—a beaten leader, it is true, of a beaten party. But it was a new party full of vigor, enthusiasm and power. Nor was it a local party: indeed, as it had arisen outside of New

[1] Albany *Argus*, Nov. 1, 1835.

York, so it was more successful elsewhere. The outlook was full of hope, even if he did not immediately perceive it to be so.

"I am once more, thank God, and I hope for a long time, at home." So Seward wrote to Thurlow Weed as he took up his neglected law practice. He had now a partner, who had some time before been a student and afterward his chief assistant. Seward was a hard worker, preferring to concentrate his attention upon one subject, even at the cost of keeping at it day and night. A good deal of his business consisted of suits in the then existing Court of Chancery in which many papers had to be drawn up. In this proceeding Seward was an easy master. He did not at this time appear as often in court as he had formerly done. His practice had extended into the county and over the western part of the state. Politics he put away from him, telling Weed to build no more cob-houses (another civilization would say "card-houses"), and offering rather gloomy predictions as to the fortunes of the Whigs, which were commonly realized. Still he did not utterly despair, as may be seen by his earnestly advising Weed not to emigrate to Michigan, not merely on business grounds, but for political reasons. "If popular principles change, and ours come into vogue, it is likely to happen here as soon as there."

He used the time also to increase his experience. In the summer of 1835, as the health of Mrs. Seward seemed to need a change, he planned and carried out a two-months' trip through Pennsylvania and

Virginia. Going necessarily in his own carriage in a leisurely way, he had a good opportunity to enjoy the scenery which delighted him greatly. The mountain valleys of Pennsylvania charmed him; they seemed as wild and romantic as anything he had seen in Switzerland. The broader and more extended beauty of the Valley of Virginia, with its extraordinary attractions of limestone cave and natural bridge, was also delightful. But it is probable that his chief interest was in the general condition of the country. We shall get near his final conclusions by comparing his impressions of the little mountain villages of Pennsylvania, and the towns in the Shenandoah Valley. At Harrisburg, after several days on the Susquehanna, he wrote: "There is an air of quiet repose about these villages which, with the primitive appearance of the buildings, gives them an especial charm. The log-houses in this country are altogether superior to ours, and may be called cottages with propriety. . . . I never could have imagined a log-house so attractive as many I have seen here." In the Valley of Virginia, he wrote: "An exhausted soil, old and decaying towns, wretchedly neglected roads, and in every respect an absence of enterprise and improvement, distinguish the region through which we have come, in contrast to that in which we live. . . . I should do injustice to neglected and abandoned East Cayuga if I were to bring it into comparison with this place, the only one of importance in the county."[1] We need not here consider the justness

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 268.

of these statements: it will be enough to recognize Seward's views. Doubtless he was very ready to be impressed just as he was, and probably equally ready with his reason. "Such has been the effect of slavery. And yet the people are unconscious, not merely of the cause of the evil, but in a great degree ignorant that other portions of the country enjoy greater prosperity."

Still we must not imagine the Sewards driving through Virginia with an eye single to the evils of a slave state. They did see things that shocked them, but beside the beauty and wonder of the natural scenery, they found much that was admirable. The country taverns, for instance, even the accommodation in private houses, Mrs. Seward thought far superior to those of New York, and she noted with approval that few of them kept spirituous liquor. Mr. Seward, at the University of Virginia, in spite of his loyal recollection of Dr. Nott and Union College, considered the plan of education superior to that of any other college in the country.

On their return, by way of Washington, he took the opportunity of being presented to the President, but in spite of the democratic simplicity at the White House he was not led to revise his views of the political character of the "Old Hero."

Settling down at Auburn, Seward found many ways to help the different enterprises for developing the town and the country around. He pushed the plan for the Auburn and Owasco Canal especially, and aided the project for a railroad to Syracuse.

His mind was actively at work seeking possibilities for prosperous development, and he labored zealously to arouse the public to them, and to remove the difficulties raised by reactionaries and obstructionists. A toast given by him at this time is noteworthy: "The Union of these States. It must be preserved. Our prosperity began, and will end with it." We might dissent from this view and probably Seward himself would have agreed that the foundations of our present civilization in America were laid long before the Union was thought of. But for the prosperity that he then had in mind—the material development of the continent—the Union was necessary.

During these years, however, he did not spend all his time quietly at Auburn, carrying on his law business, and meditating the fortunes of the country. He took hold of a practical piece of work, which though it may seem not entirely in line with his activities so far, was yet quite in harmony with his ideas and interests. A personal and political friend, Mr. Trumbull Cary, had become active in the Holland Land Purchase, one of the means by which the lands of the state came into the hands of individual small owners. A great tract in the western part had in 1792 been acquired by Robert Morris. He had sold a large portion of it to the Holland Land Company, which proposed to open it for settlement. But the company in Holland found difficulty in managing matters directly, and by this time was dividing its estate among smaller holders who would see to

the actual details. The firm of Cary and Lay had control of all the land in Chautauqua County, and appointed Seward to carry out the necessarily complicated arrangements. The greater part of the county was already partially settled, much land was occupied though not yet wholly paid for, the population was excited by all sorts of considerations. There had been violence, and in Chautauqua even destruction of the land office, so that satisfactory adjustments were by no means simple. We need not follow Seward in this business which called for skill as a lawyer, tact as a politician and courage as a business man. He threw himself earnestly into the work, settled in Chautauqua County, and by the end of the year put matters into such a condition that the bargain with the Holland Land Company could be satisfactorily carried out. The sale was arranged and Seward became a partner in the enterprise.

At this time the Democratic party was firmly entrenched in power in New York. Van Buren was President, Tallmadge and Wright were Senators, Marcy was Governor, Dix Secretary of State, Flagg Comptroller, and Croswell State Printer. In the Senate they had hardly an opponent; in the Assembly, a majority of two to one. The Federal and state patronage had long been at their control and they had used it openly. They had an organization perfected during fifteen continuous years of power.

Now, however, came the panic of 1837. This panic is said to have been the natural result of the wonderful expansion of 1836. Doubtless this

was the case, but the Whigs of that day would have been more than human if they had not declared it to be the natural result of Andrew Jackson. It is true that the "Old Hero" had retired to his "Hermitage," but he had left his political heir in the White House. There is a tradition or an invention that the Jacksonian dynasty, beginning with two terms of the "Old Hero," was to go on with two terms of Van Buren, and then two terms of Benton. But Van Buren had been in the White House not two months, before it became not merely doubtful as to whether he could be reëlected, but a matter of great good luck that he had been elected at all. If specie payments had been suspended six months before they were, Van Buren would never have won.

To Seward, busy at this time in Chautauqua County, and full of the affairs of the land company, the panic was a matter of keen interest. Its distresses were less felt in the western part of the state than in New York City and the east, and it appears that Seward and his friends in the land business were not ever put to more than temporary inconvenience. But he could not help being greatly concerned in the entire prostration of business and industry around him, and he naturally also considered the political aspects of the case. As he saw it, the chief point was that the "works of internal improvement, of paramount importance, are suspended." At Auburn, the canal, the railway, the college, as well as other plans for more especially municipal improvement had come to a dead stop.

What was the cause and what the cure? The cause was the extended speculation that had arisen from the easy accommodation of the many state banks and the destruction of the United States Bank; the latter the immediate act of Jackson. The cure was that the people should, as far as possible, take public affairs out of the hands of a set of men who had shown themselves incapable of managing them, and confide them to men who had had nothing to do with these evils, and who would rectify them by measures at once conservative and well matured. Such at least was Seward's opinion,[1] and similar views existed everywhere, not only in New York but in all parts of the country. It was most natural that the fall elections should result greatly to the advantage of the Whigs. It was an odd year: as it followed a presidential election there were neither electors nor congressmen nor governors to be chosen. But in the selection of members of the legislature, the result was entirely decisive. The Whigs elected six out of the eight senators and 101 members of the Assembly out of 128. The governor and a majority of the senators who held over were Democratic, so that the Whigs had by no means a free hand. But much had been done, and the future seemed to look suddenly bright.

[1] Expressed in a speech at Auburn in the county Whig convention. *Life*, Vol. I, p. 340.

CHAPTER VII

ELECTION AS GOVERNOR

IMMEDIATELY after the election of 1837, Seward left Auburn for Chautauqua, "a buzz of glorious Whig victories ringing in his ears." Everywhere, as he went west, he passed through crowds of friends who were delighted with the outcome and would have had him celebrate with them. For these celebrations he did not much care: his stomach for war, as he said, ended at the capitulation of the enemy. But he also had some other matters which absorbed his mind, perhaps to the exclusion of rejoicing over past success. This was an off year, but it seemed probable that the Whig triumphs would continue, and that the result of the next year's election might be as fortunate as this year's: at that time a governor of the state was to be chosen.

It would have been impossible for Seward's mind not to turn naturally in this direction, for he himself was an obvious candidate.[1] In 1834 he had been the candidate in the first Whig campaign, and had raised the highest hopes of election during the campaign.

But if Seward was an obvious candidate, there was another equally obvious; namely, Francis

[1] On Dec. 18th the Albany *Argus* spoke of "William H. Seward, the would-be governor."

Granger. Granger had been the Anti-Masonic candidate in 1830 and had astonished everybody by his run against Throop. He had tried again in 1832, but then had been beaten by Marcy by a large majority. In 1834, when there was some chance for the Whigs, he had preferred an assured election to Congress. On leaving Congress he had been the Whig candidate for Vice-President in 1836. He and Seward were old friends and political associates; yet undoubtedly Seward felt, and with perfect justice, that he was a more competent man than Granger. He considered him politically to be brilliant and of great talent, but without any large fund of information or power of argument. Neither Seward nor Weed thought him the equal of Albert H. Tracy, once a co-laborer in the Anti-Masonic field.

Whatever doubt he had of Granger's attainments, however, Seward felt that his rival had decided claims. He had been the Anti-Masonic and Whig candidate in hard days, and it would certainly be but fair for him to be recognized in days of success. He had had a broader experience than Seward, and was a man of national reputation: it was understood that he could not be the Whig candidate for Vice-President at the next election. Seward let it be known that he was desirous of deferring to any right that might be seen in the claim of Granger; otherwise he wished to leave the matter to his friends, though he foresaw that they might make a pretty quarrel out of it.

The circumstances of the year were favorable.

The Whigs were in a majority in the Assembly, but not in the Senate. They could, therefore, express their views, while they ran slight danger of making mistakes because they could not control legislative or executive action. They joined the Democrats, who urged a general banking law and the completion of the enlarged Erie Canal; but more immediately important than either of these measures, they urged the abrogation of what was called the Small Bill Law. In the year 1830, S. S. Lush of Albany had offered a resolution in the Assembly, "instructing the bank committee to inquire as to the expediency of prohibiting a circulation of all bank-notes of a less denomination than five dollars." The idea was borrowed from the English practice, with a view to bringing specie into circulation. Nothing was done about it at the time, but in 1835 Governor Marcy, following out the general Jacksonian plan, advised the gradual suppression of smaller bank-notes and at once a bill was passed to that effect. It was a most unpopular law, for the lack of small bills did not bring out specie, which became the only legal tender, but instead, all sorts of promises to pay, called "shinplasters." These were issued by anybody whose credit was respected, from a coffee-house that gave refreshment tickets good for six and a quarter cents, to the trustees of a village who paid their employees in certificates of one dollar each. Early in the year 1838 Seward came to the conclusion that the issue of small bills was necessary before the complete resumption of specie payments.

With others, he called a meeting at Auburn to consider the subject, and demand relief from the shinplasters. Other meetings were held everywhere and the matter became one of popular importance. The Whigs failed to get a repeal of the law, but the Democrats consented to a suspension for two years. This was much in favor of the Whigs, for they got all the credit for the convenience of the small bills, while their opponents who held to the principle of the law, got all the odium for its inconvenience.

The year continued without important political events: the spring elections in the towns and cities were for the most part favorable to the Whigs, and maintained the belief that their popularity was not yet at the flood; the general judgment of the Whig managers in the state was favorable to Seward's nomination. The canvass, however, was active: Granger determined to go into the convention, in spite of the opinion of the party managers, and Luther Bradish, whom the Whigs had chosen speaker of the Assembly, was also announced as a candidate. Others were mentioned, and their friends were active. Seward was active, too, and carried out an elaboration of his committee system which was most effective. Though by no means so systematic and business-like as the political machinery of to-day, it was a step in advance of the older methods, and the detail with which Seward describes it to Weed[1] shows that it was something new. As it began to

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 368.

be known, it was adopted in Ontario, and Monroe, and Seneca Counties.

The convention was held in Utica in September; and instead of finding that it chiefly favored Seward, as the party managers had expected, his friends found themselves in a minority. Granger, Bradish, Judge Edwards each had a following, less than that of Seward, but enough to keep him from gaining a majority. The two last-named candidates, however, were after two ballots neglected and the fourth ballot showed a majority for Seward. There was no ill-feeling on the part of Granger and his friends, but the Whigs went to work unitedly and a lively campaign ensued.

Seward and the party chiefly pressed their financial propositions. The *Journal* kept at the head of its editorial column: "The True Issue: Suppression of Small Bills" with a quotation from the opponent's platform. They accused the Democrats of tampering with the currency to build up a local banking system for their own ends. They declared against the recent "experiments," as they called the Jacksonian financial policy, against the sub-treasury system, against the Small Bill Law and the shinplasters, and in favor of a national banking system, and of internal improvements.

The campaign of the other side, however, is rather more instructive to one especially interested in Seward. The Democrats accepted the financial issue and called Seward "the irredeemable bank Whig candidate." But the personal canvass was

hotter than the canvass of principles. The *Argus* opened fire almost at once: the Democratic party had carried every election for governor for years except in the case of Clinton, and they began an active attack on the Whig candidate. Setting aside minor matters—the fact that Seward was young, the opinion that he was insignificant, his relations with Henry Clay, his imputed Federalism—the main allegations were of a serious nature. They were, first, that Seward was the agent and lobbyist of the Mammoth, or United States Bank; and, second, that he was the agent of a soulless, foreign corporation which was oppressing the hardy freemen of Chautauqua County. The third point was a combination of these two; namely, that his services as a lobbyist in carrying through the Assembly in 1837 the rejection of Marcy's six-million-dollar loan, and his proposal of an irredeemable post-note scheme, were a *quid pro quo* for the advance of $300,000 made by the United States Bank to Cary, Lay, and Schermerhorn for their land purchases.[1] The first two points were of the vague general character that is most useful in a political editorial or on the stump. Doubtless Seward did approve of the bank and also of the action of the Whig Assembly of 1837. But that he was the means of carrying this action (through the agency of Victory Birdseye) is something that can now be neither proved nor disproved; indeed, perhaps never could have been. It certainly seems not at all likely to one who closely reads his letters at this period. That Seward was

[1] Albany *Argus*, Oct. 9, 1838.

"the agent of a soulless foreign corporation" and so on, was only a way of putting a well-known fact. He and others, as we have seen, had purchased of the Holland Land Company their rights in Chautauqua County. To pay for these rights they borrowed money of the United States Bank through an intermediate stage, represented by the American Trust Company of Baltimore. This last institution was the "foreign corporation" so constantly mentioned, because it was incorporated under the laws of Maryland rather than of New York. Such matters were largely rhetorical perversions of well-known facts. The third point was much more practical in form at least: it was clearly implied in the *Argus* that Seward's position on the bank question was the result of the bank's lending $300,000 to him and his associates. But such a charge was obviously absurd. Seward's position in this respect, as we have seen, was settled long before the land operations were thought of. It was a very natural position, the position of all his political associates, and one easily deducible from the principles on the subject of internal improvement that had long been his political fundamentals. Doubtless he and his friends had borrowed money of the bank when they wished to negotiate their Chautauqua land proposition: it was for just such purposes, Seward thought, that the institution existed. Possibly he managed the transaction more easily for being a hearty and influential approver of the bank and its policy, than he would if he had been an opponent. But few could have believed even then that this fact had any

bearing upon his political or financial uprightness, or upon his qualifications for acting as governor of the state. To put the charge baldly shows its absurdity: the voters of Chautauqua County, the persons most involved, paid no attention to it, except formally as a matter of politics.[1]

There was another subject which to the historian is of greater interest than any of these attempts to gain a point or so in the political game. There were now enough anti-slavery men in the state to be politically considerable. Whether Seward would have given them careful attention on that ground one cannot say: he usually preferred to throw his influence where he could see its effect. But the Anti-Slavery Society sent inquiries to the Whig candidates asking certain questions. Seward's first inclination was to answer them. He wrote to Weed:

"I have studied the Abolition matter well. What say you to this course?

"1st. Answer that I am in favor of trial by jury.

"3rd. Shall not object to a repeal of nine months' slavery [*i. e.*, of the law that allowed slaves to be brought into New York, and kept as such for nine months].

[1] "The Maysville *Sentinel* of last week copied not a word [from the *Argus*] nor had a word of its own. The editor, personally friendly and well convinced of the rank injustice of this warfare, cannot, however, resist any longer. If he come out this week my answer may find its place in the *Censor* afterward and that will be about the right time." Seward to Weed, Oct. 1, 1838. Hollister MSS.

"2d. Opposed to giving free negroes right to vote.

This would be true. Heaven knows whether it would suit either side." [1]

The election came on November 7th and the two days following. Seward feared defeat: [2] he was afraid of the Abolitionist vote. It was thought that in New York City and the neighborhood votes would be lost to the Whigs because Bradish went too far in his anti-slavery ideas, while in the central part of the state Seward would lose with the anti-slavery men because he did not go far enough. The candidate would have felt more comfortable had he trusted to Thurlow Weed, who prophesied victory and gave figures which the result showed to be singularly accurate. He considered the whole state. First, New York City and the Hudson River counties which had been carried by Marcy in 1834; Weed said that in some counties majorities would be reduced while others would favor Seward. The *Argus* called this a "game of brag" but the *Journal* replied that it was as certain as election day.[3] He gave close

[1] Sept., 1838. Hollister MSS. He subsequently wrote a letter, declining to make any pledges, but stating his opinions practically as above.

[2] "Well, my dear friend, we are on the eve of the contest. Shall we compare notes? My mind is made up that the state is lost to us." Seward to Weed, Nov. 5th. Hollister MSS.

[3] *Evening Journal*, Oct. 22, 1838. Weed said of New York City, which had been Marcy's, that it would favor Seward; it did so by 800 majority. Westchester, Rockland, and Putnam would give Marcy only 1,400 majority; they did give him 1,500. Dutchess had given Marcy a majority in 1834 but would now yield 500 for Seward; the majority was 523. Columbia had been Marcy's in 1834 but the vote would now be about even; it

estimates on the other counties on which Marcy was counting.

The poll showed that he had been well informed. Seward was astonished at the result.[1] The Whigs were jubilant as they might well be: they had a majority of 10,000. They elected their governor and lieutenant-governor, five senators out of eight, 80 out of 128 members of the Assembly. The week closed for Seward with a salute of one hundred guns to celebrate the victory and the next week began with another salute, to celebrate the vote of Chautauqua. Rejoicings of all sorts followed: congratulations were too tame; festivals, bonfires, illuminations, public meetings bespoke the rapture of freemen. A Whig citizen of New York was hailed as a brother and claimed as a guest by the true-hearted and patriotic throughout the emancipated republic.[2] The Whig newspapers of every county vied with one another in elaborate and humorous accounts of the voyage of the Regency up Salt River, nor was their delirious joy all froth: the Whigs held the state government except for a Democratic majority in the Senate and this they felt sure they would gain (as they actually did) the next year.

Seward himself had little taste for such long-

gave Marcy 57 majority. In the other river counties he was inexact only because he underestimated Seward's strength. It was by such knowledge as this that Weed was considered a political wizard.

[1] "You see I was struck dumb when the election commenced." Seward to Weed, Nov. 11, 1838. Hollister MS.

[2] *Evening Journal*, Nov. 16, 1838.

drawn-out festivities and had also much else to do. Almost at once he turned to the duties of writing his inaugural message and making his appointments. When the first flush of pleasure had passed, he may still have looked forward to his term of office with a glow of pride. It was but sixteen years since he had settled in Auburn, and now he was summoned by the citizens of the state to the care of its public affairs. And he had come to this position in spite of the determined opposition of a powerful political party, guided by as powerful a political machine as could be found in the country. Despite the hostility of the Albany Regency, whose members held the chief positions not only in the state, but, so far as New York was concerned, in the United States, he had succeeded in his appeal to the voters and had been chosen governor by a handsome majority.

His rise to this distinguished office he may well have ascribed to his faithful adherence to his original principles of public life. From the very beginning he had taken the position of one who would serve the state, not as an office-holder, but in the much more useful capacity of the public-spirited private citizen, the man who without being an office-holder or a candidate for office, will yet keep a constant interest in public affairs and a constant supervision over the acts of public men. From this position he had been drawn by the unsolicited nomination and election to the Senate. But his status as a member of a small opposition was not so very different from that of a mere private citizen.

And at the close of his term as senator he had returned to private life.

Undoubtedly Seward had also been a practical politician, and had had the help and service of one of the most brilliant practical politicians of the time. He had certainly used his best efforts to manage public affairs, according to the universal custom of public men of the day. He had not thought it necessary to leave matters to manage themselves, or, more correctly, to leave the management of affairs to those whom he thought less scrupulous than himself. He had taken every means of associating himself with those who had at heart interests similar to his own. And it must be remembered that while the methods of an opposition may be unscrupulous, or even corrupt, they are far less likely to be so than are the methods of men who fight year after year to maintain themselves in places of honor or profit. Seward and Weed may have been in method as much machine politicians as they thought Marcy and Croswell were, but the chances were against it, for they had never had anything to give their friends, while Marcy and Croswell had for years controlled the patronage of the state.

Seward may fairly have looked upon his election as a triumph for the principles he had early espoused, and for his own faithful prosecution of them. So far, those principles had exhibited themselves chiefly in opposition to Jackson and the Regency, because Jackson and the Regency had been opposed to those ideas of national and state

development which Seward conceived to be absolutely essential to prosperity. Now, however, the time was come to put his ideas into positive form and we may easily imagine the interest with which he composed his message and awaited the first opportunity that should occur for actual executive action.

When Seward became Governor of New York, the state was smaller than she is now in population and resources, and in other important respects. Relatively her position was different. In the matter of population, the United States had increased immensely in the half century that had followed the establishment of the Federal government: in 1840 it was four times as great as it had been in 1790.[1] But the state of New York had grown faster still and had almost doubled the rapid rate of increase in the country at large. From being the fifth in rank, with 340,120 inhabitants spread up the Hudson River and along the Mohawk, she had become, when Seward was governor, as she has since remained, the state with the largest population in the union (namely 2,428,921). But though still largest, New York is not relatively so large as she was then, for while now she has one-tenth of the population of the whole country, in 1840 she had one-seventh.

This vast increase of population had taken place mainly in the Mohawk Valley and in the western part of the state reached by it. This great passage through the mountains, almost the only real passage

[1] Following the figures in the census of 1900.

in the whole length of the United States, had turned much of the tide of Western emigration that way. The emigration at first stopping in New York, had soon gone beyond and poured itself out into the country now included in the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and those adjoining. By the time of Seward's administration, the rapid growth of New York had been equalled and exceeded by the growth of the states beyond. What we may loosely call the North Central States, had at the beginning of the century only 51,000 inhabitants scattered here and there over vast tracts of forest and prairie, about one per cent. of the whole population. In 1810 they had about five per cent. But in 1840 they had 3,351,542 or nearly twenty per cent. within their borders and their subsequent growth was even more rapid. For this great territory and population, New York furnished the most obvious and easy outlet.

This was plainly seen: in fact, it was recognized even at a time when there was practically no population to demand either ingress or outlet. Washington noted it at Oriskany in 1783.[1] "As yet," said Gouverneur Morris somewhat later, "we only crawl along the outer shell of our country. The interior excels the part we inhabit in soil, in cli-

[1] *Of.* Seward's Speech at the Erie Railroad Jubilee, *Works*, Vol. III, p. 323. "How came that secret [of New York's commercial opportunity] to break itself to the Father of our Country? I will tell you how. He was seeking security for the union of the states which was so soon to cover this continent. He found that guaranty in commercial union, and he saw that commercial union rising out of the canals and roads which New York might construct across the isthmus on which he stood."

mate, in everything." The Erie Canal was early thought of. Seward, a senior in college at a time when it was still under construction, viewed the canal with little favor. But shortly after leaving college and looking over the state seriously with the purpose of settling in life, he changed his opinion. His practical study of the country led him to perceive its possibilities and when at Buffalo he saw the plans for the new harbor and heard the promises of Western trade, his mind was made up. He became an earnest supporter of the Erie Canal and the general principles of internal improvement.

His life since that time had been a consistent development of such views. His professional interests were in Auburn; his business interests were in Chautauqua County. His political backing came largely from west of Cayuga Bridge. His political opinions were of necessity in the direction of internal improvements, not merely because such matters were favorable to his interests and to those of his constituents, but because in choosing his interests and his constituents he had followed out definitely formed ideas. So as to politics: though beginning as a Bucktail, he had soon turned to Adams and Clinton. When the death of Clinton and the defeat of Adams had set adrift the discordant elements making up their support, he became an Anti-Mason, taking the "Hobson's choice" of their political organization to press his own political opinions. When the Anti-Masonic party came to nothing in New York, he welcomed the advent of the Whig party as a means to his desired end. He

had now been chosen governor by that party and it was not remarkable that a great deal of his first message was devoted to the subject of internal improvements, and especially to the matter of transportation.

The chief means of transportation at this time were the turnpike and the canal. Seward, when he traveled from Auburn to Albany as state senator, went by the stage-coach. It took him about as long a time as it now takes a senator from California to get to Washington. The great mass of freight, however, went by the Erie Canal, of which the tolls had so largely exceeded the estimates that already the debt incurred for its construction had virtually been paid, and an enlargement was under way. But during these years had appeared the railroad and the steam locomotive. The steamboat had for some time been seen on rivers and lakes, but these furnished a very insufficient means for communication. Hence railroads early came into use: the first built in New York was that from Albany to Schenectady. This railroad, however, did not immediately employ steam: the passengers took seats, the driver cracked his whip, and one horse pulled the load between the cities. By 1839, however, steam had been very generally introduced.

In his annual message, then, Seward devoted a good deal of attention to the question of canals and railroads. "Thirteen years' experience," he wrote, meaning since the opening of the Erie Canal, "has proved the inadequacy of all our thoroughfares for the transportation of persons and property between

the frontier and tide-waters." He advocated the completion of the enlargement of the canal. Then turning to the application of steam locomotion to land, he advised the prosecution of the important railroad enterprises already undertaken. Three great lines of communication seemed clear; one through the northern counties to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, one through the Mohawk Valley and westward, one through the southern counties to Lake Erie. The last two were already being exploited and Seward urged that the legislature inquire at once into the condition of the main projects and grant them such aid as might be necessary to their rapid prosecution.

Seward had views on internal improvement, but also went to Albany with the hope of doing something to improve the financial situation. The panic of 1837 had passed, but there were still matters that called for adjustment, especially the Small Bill Law, which had done much to give Seward his election. The act that prohibited the issue of bills lower than five dollars had been suspended for two years; this in Seward's mind was not satisfactory, and he therefore recommended its entire repeal. He also expressed himself in regard to the general financial condition. "The experimental situation of the country," he said, meaning Jackson's attack on the United States Bank, had not only been highly calamitous in itself, but it had brought about in the different states extraordinary legislation, such as the Small Bill Law. The state of New York was not, of course, in a position to remedy this failure in

national legislation. Yet New York, as much as any other state, needed financial security. Seward ventured ironically to hope that "since the government has ascertained that its financial business can be conducted without a bank, it will speedily adopt some fixed and permanent system for the collection and disbursement of its revenues." As for New York, he remarked that in her efforts to promote the prosperity and welfare of her citizens, "she asks of the Federal government to be let alone."

Another topic which Seward had in mind in considering the possibilities of the governor's office, though one which had not made much appearance in what is called politics, was the reform of legal procedure. He also contemplated some changes in the administration of the public schools. All these matters, and others as well, he embodied in a message which he wrote and revised with the greatest care, taking the advice of Judge Miller, who was skilful in pruning down eloquence; of Thurlow Weed of course; of Dr. Nott on the subject of education; of Samuel B. Ruggles, who was subsequently named canal commissioner; and of others. The result was satisfactory as a statement of principle, and was allowed to be written in an easy and elegant style. The only fault alleged against it by Hammond, the contemporary Democratic historian, was that (like some other good things) it was too long.

On one thing Seward and Weed may well have congratulated themselves: they had at last beaten the Regency. After an opposition of sixteen years, they had succeeded in putting that body out of

power and as it happened finally. The old Regency never came together again. Van Buren at "Lindenwald" and Marcy at Washington were practically out of New York politics. Talcott, Knower, and Roger Skinner were dead. Silas Wright, Flagg, Croswell, John A. Dix and others often acted together after this time, but they were frequently divided by faction, and though the Democratic party had powerful leaders from Horatio Seymour to Samuel J. Tilden, whose names have been associated with the Regency, yet that compact and influential body, which had first brought Seward and Weed into opposition, really came to an end when they attained to power.[1]

It had had a remarkable career: for sixteen years it had ruled the state with the partial exception of the years in which Clinton was governor. Its leaders had been governors, when it had seemed best, or United States senators, and its chief had become President of the United States, while its control of the state and Federal patronage had given its other members and their friends what offices they wished to take. They had, so far, succeeded in their appeals to the people. Yates, Van Buren, Throop, Marcy, had all been easily elected and they had had a large and almost unvarying majority in the legislature.

[1] Note the humorous remark of Marcy: "Even before the ballot-boxes were closed, I had partly persuaded myself to engage in a work for my posterity, by writing the history of the rise, progress, and termination of the Regency."—Alexander, *Political History of New York*, Vol. II, p. 30. It would have been a most interesting work.

Now the Whigs were in the saddle. They had the governor and the Assembly; they were soon to have the Senate and the state officers. It must have occurred to Thurlow Weed, the Dictator, as he was humorously called, that it was one thing to be in opposition and another to be in office. Nowhere does the weakness of the Whigs appear more strongly than in their success. Seward was too large a man to govern the state for the advantage of party. And beside the Governor and the Dictator, there were few leaders of power. John C. Spencer was chosen Secretary of State. He was a strong man but he had not always been in accord with his party and he would not be in the future.[1] For Comptroller Fillmore was thought of but he preferred his place in Congress and Bates Cooke, an old Anti-Mason, was chosen. The new Attorney-General was Willis Hall, who became a prominent man in the party. As senator, N. P. Tallmadge was reëlected. He had been leader of the Regency majority in the state Senate when Seward was there and had been elected to the United States Senate as a Regency candidate, but he had gone over to the Whigs on the bank question. There were undoubtedly Whigs of ability in and out of office, but though they had a greater statesman as leader and a greater practical politician as manager, than the Regency could produce, yet they failed as a party. They were no stronger at the end of Seward's administration than at the beginning; in fact, they were easily defeated.

[1] He was for Jackson in earlier days and for Tyler later.

There were many reasons, doubtless, but the chief one was that the Whigs were really mere opportunists, a party of opposition. They did not stand for what their leaders thought most important. When men felt ready to stake all on the issue that they saw was absolutely paramount, the Whig party passed out of existence, and a new one was formed.

CHAPTER VIII

GOVERNOR SEWARD

THE Whigs lost no time in carrying out their election pledges. On the first day of the term Mr. Taylor gave notice that he would bring in a measure for the repeal of the Small Bill Law, and as the Democrats, who controlled the Senate, were favorable, it quickly passed. Other Whig measures did not fare so well. It will be remembered that the Senate was made up of members chosen from eight districts for terms of four years: its political complexion therefore changed but slowly. In 1834, when Seward's term expired, it had been almost entirely Democratic. When Seward became governor, the Whigs had got thirteen members and naturally hoped to increase their number at the next election when the terms of several Democrats would expire. Their expectation was realized, for the following year they elected seven senators to the Democrats' three,[1] which gave them nineteen, or a good working majority. At present, however, there was a Democratic majority, which declined to act with the governor except in cases of necessity. The Whigs could not elect their candidate to the United States Senate. When it came to the state officers who were chosen on joint ballot, they easily carried the day.

[1] There were two additional vacancies.

Beyond these proceedings, however, the strictly political aspects of the session were not of much moment. A reading of the laws of the state of New York for 1839 discloses no measure of political importance, among the mass of acts allowing men to change their names, tax collectors to hand in reports late, charters to be amended, money to be loaned to towns or counties, except the Small Bill Law. There was one interesting matter arising from national politics. The Democratic majority in the House, vexed at the persistence with which John Quincy Adams presented petitions concerning slavery, had resolved not to consider any such petitions. This high-handed proceeding, beside being an entirely undemocratic act, seemed very unwise from a political standpoint. It gave the Whigs a chance to take to themselves the honor of being the defenders of the right of petition, and the Assembly of New York promptly adopted resolutions denouncing the "Atherton gag," as it was called. Yet in a larger view the position was not very impolitic, for it was entirely sincere. The Democratic party, now and long afterward, did not wish any agitation on the subject of slavery that would break up its organization in North and South. The Whigs who protested against this action, were in the same situation, but they did not choose to acknowledge it.

The matter is clear now when we read the discussion that took place concerning the presidency. Henry Clay was without a rival in a personal popularity well deserved for sound ability. Webster was even a greater statesman. Yet the leaders of the

party were able to consider the "availability" of so weak a personality as General Harrison, because Clay was a slaveholder and might lose votes at the North, while Webster was a declared Unionist and might lose votes at the South. They allowed themselves to be carried away by the experience of Jackson, which had shown them that a general was a good candidate. A party which can do this is hardly to be called a party: it is more like an organization for plunder, as Harrison discovered to his cost. It was eminently characteristic that the Whig convention, held during this winter, nominated Harrison and Tyler, but adjourned without adopting any resolutions or address, which should state their principles, or pointing out any reasons why people should vote for their candidates.

These things, however, were not immediately effective: in the election of 1839 the Whigs were still successful. Although their majority in the Assembly was somewhat lessened, they gained the majority in the Senate. Seward in his message of 1840 addressed a legislature which was finally in political accord with him. He recommended advancement in the directions which seemed to him most important;—internal improvements, law reform, the school system. On these subjects progress was made, though by no means rapidly. The legislature was much more expeditious in some matters which the muse of history will deem less important. They speedily elected N. P. Tallmadge to the United States Senate, and Thurlow Weed to the position of State Printer in place of Edwin Croswell, who had

held it worthily and profitably for a period of seventeen years. They elected a new canal board, all Whigs, instead of the Democratic board. They passed a bill for the registration of voters in New York City, which, though founded on the right principle, was so clearly a party measure that Seward prepared to veto it, and was dissuaded from so doing only by urgent political considerations. He was wrong in approving it, however, for the bill proved so impracticable that it was repealed the next session.

But it would be a mistake to give the idea that the Whigs were so absorbed in party politics that they made no effort to sustain Seward in the measures which he deemed of vital interest. They gave attention to the question of canals and railroads and carried out efficaciously the governor's plans. The legislation for the year 1840 shows acts for the extension of many canals now almost forgotten, as well as for the aid and encouragement of many railroads which, though disguised under such unfamiliar names as the Albany and West Stockbridge Railroad, or the Buffalo and Batavia Railroad, are clearly parts of the great system of transportation now so necessary.

On some matters, however, Seward found it more difficult to secure party support. During the first year of his administration, he had become more solicitous than before on the subject of popular education. In the fall of 1839 he visited the city of New York, and there gained some practical knowledge of the workings of the school system. At that

time the public schools were not managed by the city itself, but by the Public School Society which received and expended the public money. In spite of the best efforts of this society,—and it was acknowledged to be well administered,—there were great numbers of children who did not go to school; —about 25,000, it appeared, in a population of 600,000. The matter seemed to Seward most important and he sought the advice of Dr. Nott, the president of his alma mater, and of Dr. Luckey, of the Methodist Church. The result of this consideration was a passage in the message of 1840 as follows:

"The children of foreigners, found in great numbers in our populous cities and towns, and in the vicinity of our public works, are too often deprived of the advantages of our system of public education in consequence of prejudices arising from difference of language or religion. It ought never to be forgotten that the public welfare is as deeply concerned in their education as in that of our own children. I do not hesitate, therefore, to recommend the establishment of schools in which they may be instructed by teachers speaking the same language with themselves and professing the same faith."[1]

This recommendation was not accepted by the Whigs as a whole, largely because the foreigners in question were chiefly Irish, who were commonly Democrats. Seward, however, pressed the idea in the next session, so that the Secretary of State, John C. Spencer, made an elaborate report on the

[1] *Works*, Vol. II, p. 215.

school system, proposing the extension to New York City of the district system which prevailed in the rest of the state. The Senate believed that this plan would be entirely destructive of good order and management, and declined to pass that part of the bill which embodied it, on grounds that would today be very generally considered proper. Seward thought otherwise. He felt that he had taken upon himself the cause of the foreigner,—in this case the Irish Catholic of New York City. If his general ideas of justice had not led him to this opinion, his ideas of the importance of education to the mass of immigrants now coming to America would have done so. His views on internal improvement were beginning to broaden out, as he saw that the country, as a whole, needed not only transportation but free labor and plenty of it. The great number of immigrants in New York were opposed to him politically, but he felt strongly that the country could not prosper unless they had an opportunity for as good an education as could be had. For his part, he saw no way for them to get it save in schools where they might be instructed by teachers of their own language and their own faith, and this he thought could be brought about only by the district system. He returned to the matter at the next session (1842), calling attention to it in his last annual message.

In the very considerable agitation that arose, Seward was in principle right and consistent, although the means that he advocated is not now thought the best. His phrase about speech and re-

ligion was widely misunderstood: it was represented as meaning that instruction might be in foreign languages; that religious teaching should find a place in the schools. Seward had neither of these ideas. The Irish Catholics, he saw, were kept away by the priests from schools with Protestant teachers. The German children, he saw, often had a very poor chance with teachers who had no knowledge of their language. He thought that if the various districts of a city could regulate their own school conditions, the matter could be adjusted. It is true that Seward's position is not now deemed wise, but he took it and maintained it conscientiously and in opposition to his own political party. In writing to Bishop Hughes in 1841 after having declined a renomination in 1842 he says: "I am not now a candidate, nor can I foresee an occasion when I shall either find it my duty, or have a desire, to offer myself for the suffrages of my fellow citizens. Whatever may have been thought before, I can afford now, at least, to be frank and honest. I reaffirm all I have before promulgated concerning the policy of this country in regard to foreigners and the education of their children."

Seward now had an opportunity to stand up to the glittering generalities of earlier days. In a Fourth of July oration at Syracuse in 1831, he had spoken of the United States as a country where "universal education enables every man to understand the constitution, laws, interests of the state." But on a later Fourth (1839), speaking at a Sunday-school celebration at Staten Island, with the conditions of

New York City fresh in his mind he candidly says: "Our institutions, excellent as they are, have hitherto produced but a small portion of the beneficent results they are calculated to confer on the people." He made his best efforts to correct the inconsistency: he was not very successful in a practical way, and politically the evil results pursued him through life. Immediately they were bad. Seward's measures alienated from him the Whigs who disapproved of his plans and did not gain the political support of those whom he sought to aid. The point was characteristic and important: no other position of Seward's was more prejudicial to his own interests.[1] If we look for one thing more than any other that stood in the way of Seward's final attainment of the highest object of his political ambition, we shall find nothing more apparent than this espousal of the cause of the foreign immigrant. Seward could not have seen the future possibilities of his actions, but if he had, he could hardly have had other opinions; and when he later observed the political necessities of his views, he still refused to change his position. With a mind set upon the prosperity of the country, he saw clearly that slave labor was a drawback, and that a free labor system must prevail. But free labor meant immigration and, to be healthy, immigration demanded the best education.

Another case in which Seward felt himself called

[1] Exception will perhaps be made by some, of Seward's anti-slavery opinions. But these were not in the main prejudicial to his interests because he made them practically the mainspring of his political life, and stood or fell with them.

on to act for himself, though not embroiling him with his own party, was yet one which called for firmness. He had long felt that the administration of justice in the state was not what it should be. While in the Senate, he had given time and effort to the abolition of imprisonment for debt, and with general success. Something still remained to be done in applying the principle to those who were held by process in the United States courts. He recommended also that the district judges should be relieved of the appointment of certain county officials as treasurers, superintendents of the poor-house, and others. These propositions met with no objection to speak of. When, however, he proposed to reduce legal fees and to simplify legal proceedings, he found very serious opposition. He persevered, however, and Senator Maynard, from Seward's own district, introduced a bill which was carried through during the session of 1839. In addition to these things, there was of course an immense number of matters that made demands upon his time and strength. The applications to the executive for pardon are always difficult to decide. Seward investigated carefully and did his best to use the powers given him for the right. At the end of his first term he was charged with reckless and unworthy bestowal of pardon, but when the facts were known, it appeared that he had granted in all only 136 pardons in two years, while none of his predecessors had in that time fallen short of 200, and some had reached the number of 600. There was also an interesting element in the relation of the governor

of the state with the various Indian tribes still within its borders. Seward's first official dinner was given to a delegation of Oneida and Stockbridge Indians, who had come to lay before him certain grievances and claims. Another matter which caused him great difficulty was what was called the Helderberg Anti-Rent War. Readers of Cooper's *Chainbearer*, and more particularly *The Indians*, will remember the possibilities offered by the large colonial grants of land for great misunderstandings on the subject of rent. The Helderberg war was a misunderstanding that arose on the death of the patroon, General Stephen Van Rensselaer, at the attempt of his heir to collect his rents. Seward was able to deal with the open lawlessness that was threatened, but the real difficulties at issue were not settled until long afterward.

Beside these matters of considerable importance, there were unnumbered matters of all kinds, most of which could have been attended to by any upright, intelligent, and kind-hearted man, as well as by the governor of the state. There was the going to dinners, and to Fourth of July and commencement celebrations; the attending to scientific or literary departments of the government, and other tasks of that kind. Seward felt that he had too much to do, but he often enjoyed these miscellaneous occupations as much as any of his more important duties. Not least among these official occasions did he enjoy his annual visit to Union College at commencement, in the capacity not merely of old graduate, but also of ex-officio trustee as governor

of the state. He had kept up his relations with the college, and often turned to Dr. Nott for advice, retaining through life his affection and respect for his old president, whose picture hung over the mantel of Seward's study in his house at Washington long afterward.

As his first term drew to an end, there arose the question of renomination. As a private matter, Seward would probably have inclined to withdraw, if only for financial reasons. His salary did not go far toward defraying the large expense that he was compelled to incur and he had, of course, no time to earn anything more. He had had small savings when he was elected, and his partnership in the Holland land business was, at this time, rather a burden than a help. Nevertheless, as his political friends considered it essential, he consented to a renomination, although it was certain that there were definite elements in the state that would join the Democrats in opposition to him.

It could not, however, have been thought that there was much risk of defeat. The campaign of 1840 was one which has become famous in the history of the country. It was the "Hard Cider," "Log-Cabin," "Tippecanoe" campaign. Those names very properly describe it because they have in themselves no particular meaning as applied to politics. It is difficult to believe that any man could have voted intelligently for Harrison, either because he drank hard cider, or had lived in a log-cabin, or had been victor in the battle of Tippecanoe. We might also add that one would hardly

have voted for him for any other good reason, for though a perfectly worthy and respectable man, he was by no means so deserving of the presidency as Henry Clay or Daniel Webster, the great leaders of the Whig party. But this was a campaign of enthusiasm. The Whigs were a growing party; they were the friends of liberty and were bound to triumph; in fact, their minds were chiefly set on triumphing. They were confident that if there were no accident, they could be successful against Van Buren; and as they had never yet had a national victory, they felt that they could not miss the present chance. If they could win in 1840, they would then be hopeful for 1844. Hence so shrewd an observer as Thurlow Weed writes: "Though warmly attached to Mr. Clay, and preferring him over all others for President, I did not believe he could be elected. I was influenced by two considerations: First, that Mr. Clay himself should not be subjected to the mortification of defeat; and second, that the Whig party should not lose its opportunity."[1]

The Whigs did not lose their opportunity. They nominated Harrison for purely opportunist reasons, went about electing him with a rush, made a whirlwind campaign, and were appropriately rewarded a month after his inauguration by the accession of Tyler, who having never lived in a log-cabin or drunk hard cider or fought at Tippecanoe, proved to be a President very disagreeable to them.

With all this Seward had very little to do. He had been nominated at Utica at a vast mass-meeting

[1] *Life of Weed*, Vol. I, p. 480.

of 25,000 people, with plenty of log-cabins and so on. But these inspiring adjuncts had little connection with Seward, and were of small aid to him in his canvass against William C. Bouck, the Democratic candidate. Mr. Bouck was one of the canal commissioners whom the Whigs had removed to give place to men of their own party. He was therefore as available as Seward, so far as internal improvements were concerned. The Small Bill issue, so important two years before, had been successfully settled by Seward himself. He had lost some of his strong cards, and also held some rather weak ones. His position on the school question had given a means of opposition: the Protestants were told that he meant to hand over the school system to the Pope; the Catholics were told that however favorable to their views Seward might be, the Whig party was opposed to him in that respect. A certain hostility also had been stirred up by Seward's attempts at legal reform, on the part of those who had more interest in maintaining things as they were than in idealistic notions for the future. His avowed anti-slavery views were prejudicial to him at the polls, because many Whigs were thereby led to vote against him; while those who approved his opinions, voted for the anti-slavery candidate, James G. Birney. Here Seward was only half-heartedly Whig: he saw how the party stood on the question of slavery and therefore could not consent to the nomination of Clay.[1] But he

[1] "So long ago as 1838, 1839, 1840, it was certain that the abolition of slavery had become an element of the Whig party

also could not see any wisdom in the nomination of Harrison.

It was a Whig year, however, and Seward was re-elected. He came in with a majority less than his own of two years before and about half that of Harrison, who ran somewhat ahead of his ticket as Seward ran somewhat behind it. There were a good many Democrats who would not vote for Van Buren, but there were as many Whigs who would not vote for Seward. He was held to be too theoretical. His general principles in education are now taken for granted. His legal reforms were carried the next session of the legislature and have never been repealed. His anti-slavery ideas were fought out in the Civil War. Seward was wiser in these respects than many who supported Harrison. But in 1840 wisdom was not so seductive a voice in the streets as "Hard Cider," the "Log-Cabin," and "Tippecanoe."

in the North, an element of great power for the strength and exhaustion of the party. Many of us knew in 1840 that the nomination of Mr. Clay would expel Abolitionism from the party, and our advice to the contrary prevailed. The Whig party succeeded." Seward to Mrs. Schuyler, Nov. 13, 1844. Schuyler MSS.

CHAPTER IX

SECOND TERM AS GOVERNOR

With the death of Harrison came no real check upon the plans and hopes of the Whig party. Harrison himself had not been essential to their campaign; Tyler promised to carry out his principles, and at first retained his cabinet; Congress had a Whig majority in each house. But it soon appeared that Tyler was not precisely the man he had been supposed to be. Seward's experience with him arose from correspondence with the general government in the McLeod case, which had arisen some time before.

This matter grew out of the excitement that had prevailed a few years previously in New York, as well as in other states bordering upon Canada, on the occasion of an insurrection in that province. As is very likely to happen in such cases, great sympathy was expressed in New York with the insurgents, and all sorts of efforts were made to render assistance, which were repressed as far as possible by the officials of the state and of the United States. In the course of these proceedings the *Caroline*, a steamer which was asserted to be owned or chartered by people who meant to help the Canadian insurgents, was attacked by a party sent out by the Canadian government and burned. The attack took place while the *Caroline* was in

an American port. All this occurred before Seward became governor.

In November, 1840, however, Alexander McLeod, a Canadian who happened to be in Niagara, N. Y., admitted or boasted that he had been concerned in the *Caroline* affair, and was therefore arrested on the charge of arson, and put in jail in Lockport. The incident at once aroused international excitement. Great Britain avowed herself to be responsible for it, whereby, in her view, it ceased to be a personal matter, and demanded that McLeod be released. The United States government replied that whether that view were to be taken or not, the case was at present in the hands of the judiciary of the state of New York for examination and that the Federal government could not interfere. Popular feeling was such that when bail was offered for McLeod, the bondsmen thought best to withdraw it. Shortly afterward he was indicted for murder; namely, of one of those killed on the *Caroline*.

Such cases are most delicate: no state can have any direct dealings with a foreign power, so that all negotiations have to pass through the general government. On the other hand, a foreign country rarely understands why the Federal government cannot compel one of the United States to do as it desires. In this case there was no real friction between the state and the general government, until a curious accident arose. Ambrose Spencer, who, it happened, had accepted a retainer to defend McLeod, was appointed United States district attorney for the northern district of New York.

He saw fit to continue his services to McLeod after his appointment. In the trial, therefore, the public was presented with the curious spectacle of a prisoner prosecuted by the attorney-general of the state and the district attorney of the county, and defended by the United States district attorney. Seward wrote to President Tyler, calling his attention to the matter, but the President answered that the affair was a part of Mr. Spencer's private business and that he would not interfere. It appeared as if the politicians would be able to make an issue out of the case. The trial took place in October, 1841, and resulted in the acquittal of McLeod on the ground of an alibi. The British commandant of the *Caroline* expedition sent a deposition to the effect that he neither knew nor believed McLeod to have been concerned in the incident, while other persons testified that he had been elsewhere. He was therefore released and sent to Canada, and the affair was dropped. But its impression upon Seward was by no means satisfactory. He was thought to have acted with wisdom and firmness, but the attitude of the President and the general government had been not at all what he might have expected or hoped.[1]

[1] "Nothing could have been more unkind or unwise than the course pursued toward me by the general government in relation to the McLeod affair. . . . It has been somewhat oppressive upon me personally, to have Mr. Webster roll over upon us the weight of his great name and fame to smother me." To Morgan in *Life*, Vol. I, p. 552. But he also wrote home: "The Supreme Court has maintained all my positions and overthrown Mr. Webster's in the McLeod case." Vol. I, p. 552.

As he had his difficulties with the general government in this case, so in another case did Governor Seward come in contact with the government of another state. If his experience with Tyler had given him new ideas on the subject of general politics, his experience in the Virginia case must have caused him to think far more seriously than ever before on the subject of slavery. Anti-slavery was forcing itself upon the public mind in many ways. We have already mentioned its influence during Seward's first election, and seen how he had feared that it would wreck his canvass. After the election occurred some practical cases of more importance than the theoretical ones propounded by the anti-slavery men.

The first of these arose on the demand of the governor of Virginia for the return of three negro sailors who were accused of helping a slave to escape from Norfolk, Va. There was no disagreement about the main facts, which were these: A negro slave named Isaac had been employed upon a schooner from New York then lying in Norfolk harbor. On the schooner were three negro sailors, one of whom, according to Isaac's testimony, had told him he was foolish to stay in Virginia when he could get good wages in the North. However that was, Isaac was missed when the ship left. His owner sent to New York, and he was found concealed in the schooner and carried back to Virginia. The governor of Virginia now applied to the governor of New York for the delivery of the three negroes who had, it was alleged, helped Isaac to escape.

The matter, although not of great intrinsic importance (except to the three men involved), was one that brought up several delicate questions. It would have been easy enough to have at once delivered the sailors, as an act of comity between sister states. But Seward seems to have thought this an impossibility. For one thing he, doubtless, felt the natural right of everybody to remain free unless he had committed some crime, which in his view did not appear in the premises. Next, there was the feeling about slavery common at the North and the dislike to be domineered over by the slave power. And finally there was the reluctance to extend the principle of the return of fugitive slaves a step farther than was absolutely necessary. So Seward wrote to the governor of Virginia, first that the papers in the case were deficient, and when he had received fuller information, he declined to do as the governor asked. His ground for such refusal was the simple view that the case did not come under the article of the Constitution which authorizes and enjoins the delivery of persons "charged in any state with treason, felony, or other crime."[1] Aiding a slave to escape was a crime in Virginia, so that the governor of that state thought that he was charging the three sailors with a crime, and so bringing the case under the Constitution. But aiding a slave to escape was not a crime in New York, so that the governor of that state did not view the specified act as such, and therefore did not regard the case as coming under the Constitution.

[1] Article IV, Sec. II, p. 2.

"The true question," said Seward, "is whether the state of which they [the sailors] are citizens is under a constitutional obligation to surrender its citizens to be carried to the offended state, and there tried for offenses unknown to the laws of their own state." There were no precedents that Seward knew of, and he declined to make the delivery. In fact, the men had already been released by the recorder of the city of New York and had gone their ways. But that did not end the matter. The governor of Virginia dissented from Seward's view and wrote several letters, to which Seward replied with restatements of his own position.

The question was one which seemed of importance only because it had a bearing upon slavery. Not very long before, demands had been made upon Seward for the delivery of fugitives from other states, charged with offenses that were not crimes by the laws of New York. Seward had denied those requests and nothing further was heard of them. But this case lasted through his two terms. Lieutenant-Governor Hopkins of Virginia, with whom it had originated, left it to his successor. Governor Gilmer referred it to the Virginia legislature which had it examined by a special committee, and then sent a request to Seward to refer it to the legislature of New York. Seward did so, with the remark that the case was an executive matter, but that he should be glad to have any advice that the legislature cared to give. The legislature of Virginia also asked the governor to send copies of the Virginia report to the

executive of each state with the request that they be laid before the legislatures, and to ask especially each of the slaveholding states to co-operate with Virginia. When these measures did not succeed in changing Seward's position, Governor Gilmer, in his annual message, urged the legislature to consider whether, if no other remedy could be found, it might not become their "imperative and solemn duty to appeal from the canceled obligations of the compact to original rights and the law of self-preservation." Some months afterward, when a person named Curry, charged with forgery in New York, had been arrested in Virginia, a request for his delivery was made. The governor ordered that he be given up when the three negro sailors were given up by the state of New York; but subsequently he receded from the position and surrendered the man. The Virginia legislature passed a law establishing an inspection of vessels sailing for ports in New York, with a view to detecting those who should assist slaves to escape, and punishing them with a fine of $500 or four months' imprisonment. The matter lasted longer still, into the administration of Seward's successor, who, being a Democrat, had rather different views upon the subject. All this time the three negro sailors, having been released upon a writ of *habeas corpus*, walked the streets or sailed the seas, without again intruding upon history.

Seward, however, had received an intimation on the subject of slavery which must have made a last-

ing impression. He had previously considered the slavery question on several occasions. He had lived in Georgia and traveled in Virginia and had formed some opinions from his own observation. He had further been led to go over the subject theoretically and had come to the conclusion that slavery was a bar to the progress of the country, which the Democratic party was very unlikely to remove or lessen. Perhaps, as time went on, he saw that the Whig party was not very likely to remove it, either. But, however those things stood in his mind, here was a practical case, something that brought very close to him the true nature of the conflict involved. For he must have seen that though his own view seemed correct to himself, the view of the governor of Virginia was a very natural one. Certainly Seward could not think it right to give up men who were accused of what to him and as regards the laws of New York, was no crime at all. But on the other hand, the state of Virginia was not extravagant in its desire that those who were accused of a serious crime should not easily find asylum in another state. If the men had been legally accused of stealing any other kind of property, New York would readily have sent them back to Virginia. They were accused of stealing what was property to the Virginian, and because New York had a different view, the quest was refused. Until this different way of looking at things ceased, there were sure to be cases of dispute, and probably, as time went on, in matters of far more importance than the return of three negro sailors charged with felony.

In other ways we must note Seward's position in this respect. He felt that as the state of New York did not acknowledge the existence of slavery within its borders, it was inconsistent to have laws which recognized the institution. Accordingly he procured the repeal of the measure that permitted a master traveling through the state with slaves, to retain them nine months. He procured the passage of a law that granted a jury trial to persons accused of being fugitive slaves, and of another law that prohibited state officers from having any connection with proceedings looking to the recovery of fugitive slaves. Finally, he urged an amendment to the state constitution by which the suffrage should be extended to the negro on the same ground as the white man. In these respects New York could act for herself,[1] and when that was the case, Seward desired that she should consistently take the position necessitated by justice and humanity.

His handling of the controversy with Virginia, while it had made him friends, had also made him enemies. Lord Morpeth, afterward the Earl of Carlisle, who was at this time traveling in the United States, says of Seward that he was the first person he had met (it was in the earlier part of his travels in America) who did not speak slightingly of the Abolitionists; he thought they were gradually gaining ground. "He had already acted a spirited part," he goes on, "in points connected with slavery, especially in a contest with the legislature of

[1] The laws mentioned with regard to fugitive slaves, however, were later declared unconstitutional.

Virginia, concerning the delivery of fugitive slaves." [1]

Early in his second term Seward had announced that he would not be a candidate for reëlection. "Few," he said at the time, "will understand the grounds of this decision." The main consideration was that he no longer felt himself the actual leader of the Whig party in the state. The party would not follow him on the issues that he considered essential. On the main point of his policy for state and country,—that of internal improvements,—they were in sympathy. But on other points which to Seward seemed necessary developments of his fundamental idea of national growth, he was in disagreement with many of his political friends. He considered the cause of free labor as important as that of internal improvement,[2] and therefore he pressed his ideas on popular education, on naturalization, and, in general, on other measures for the advantage of the immigrant. Therefore also he was an anti-slavery man. In March, 1842, he wrote to Lewis Tappan, concerning the address of the Liberty party's state convention in Ohio: "I am right glad to see the argument for abolishing slavery placed upon the impregnable and yet popular ground of the evils resulting to the whole country from the maintenance of a system of compulsory labor in the South." This may not have been a correct view; we can see that it was not entirely so from what follows: "Every day will win listeners

[1] Carlisle: *Travels in America*, p. 26.
[2] See his first message.

and favor conviction, under such arguments as these, while the moral question encounters prejudices, the growth of centuries." The anti-slavery movement did not work itself out on these lines, but such a passage shows how Seward harmonized his anti-slavery views with the general policy which he had pursued from the beginning of his public life.

The Whig party, however, did not agree with him in these matters. They would not commit themselves on the anti-slavery question for obvious reasons. They would not commit themselves on the school and naturalization questions, because the great mass of immigrants were Democrats. There were also plenty of people in the state who opposed these last measures because the great mass of immigrants were Irish and usually Catholics. A curious exhibition of the confusion of ideas and principles in this matter is shown by the feeling excited at just this time by the Repeal agitation of Daniel O'Connell.

The movement aroused great sympathy in America. Seward was much interested in it, although when asked to take an active part in Repeal meetings or Repeal associations, he declined on the ground that so long as he held an official position he could not properly do so. But his feelings were well known and he was often in communication with Irish-Americans who were politically opposed to him. O'Connell himself, however, was not wholly to the mind of the Democratic party to which the Irish commonly belonged, because of his vigorous denunciation of slavery.

In these various ways, therefore, Seward was not in harmony with his party. Even in the McLeod case, which had nothing to do with such matters, he found himself opposed by the general government, so that at one time he was supported only by the Democratic party in the state, while the Whigs were against him. During the last year of his term, his position, from one standpoint at least, became rather easier, for the Democrats carried a majority of seats in the Assembly, and even gained a majority in the Senate. They, therefore, elected Democratic state officers, and Seward found himself a Whig governor with a hostile majority. Though this relieved him from the responsibility of differing with his own party, it put him in the more painful position of having contributed to its defeat. He was therefore glad, on all accounts, that he had not considered the possibility of another term. There were other Whigs who had claims upon the office. Of these Luther Bradish, the lieutenant-governor, was the chief, but Fillmore and Collier were also named. Mr. Bradish was nominated though the result was unfavorable to the Whigs. William C. Bouck, an old and tried Democrat, was elected.

Seward closed his term of office in no burst of splendor and with little recognition. Yet he had governed the state well, if not as a party man, certainly as a public-spirited citizen. He made a great impression on the popular mind by his administration. There is an apocryphal story of how he once told a stage-driver that he was governor of the

state and was amused to find the man very doubtful. "Let us leave it to the next innkeeper," said Seward. The next innkeeper, who was something of a humorist, was appealed to as to whether Seward were not governor. "No," said he, "you are not." "Well," said Seward with interest, "if I am not governor of the state, who is?" "Thurlow Weed!" was the reply. There is another story that tells how Seward appointed Judge Sackett of Seneca Falls commissioner to consider the Helderberg grievances. One day Sackett asked Seward to drive out to the Helderberg on some business. When they stepped from the carriage, the crowd at once surrounded Judge Sackett, who was a fine-looking man over six feet in height, with a very dignified bearing and a gold-headed cane, and gave three cheers. Sackett corrected their mistake, but many of them, he reported, refused to believe that the little man was governor of the state. In spite of such facts and such stories, however, Seward was the real governor, and few governors were longer remembered. Years after he had gained other titles of honor, the name "Governor Seward" stuck to him, not only in the state itself, but in national fields. We can think of no one of his predecessors or successors to whom the title clung so persistently.

CHAPTER X

NEW ISSUES

ONCE before when Seward departed from Albany for Auburn, it had seemed that he was leaving the proud world and going home. And when he had got to his family and friends, his house and his office, he had often felt that he was in his true place, the place that he liked and was meant for. He looked out from "the loopholes of his retreat" on Thurlow Weed and Francis Granger, on Maynard and Whittlesey and Tracy and the rest as senseless gladiators in a dusty arena. In fact, he had often dreamed of the pleasure of retiring from the law to a farm that would yield him enough to keep him and his family, without troubling himself about public or private business.[1]

Now at the end of his administration, the feeling came upon him more strongly than ever, and there was less temptation to shake it off, and less outside activity to dispel it. Almost for the first time he returned to Auburn without real political occupation. He was still an adviser, but not exactly a worker in the Whig party. His political friends of earlier days were scattered. Maynard was dead,

[1] "By and by, I too shall get at ease and then, oh then, for long letters, books, philosophy and La Grange letters." Seward to Weed, 1836. Hollister MSS.

Tracy had retired to private life, Whittlesey was now a judge, Granger was in Washington. New men were becoming important in the party. Even Thurlow Weed, relieved of his duties as State Printer, was about to leave the scene of action and go abroad. Seward himself felt a little estranged from his party. He had been governor of the state for four years and his ideas of duty had often carried him along lines which his political allies would not follow. He had insisted on changes in the judicial system that had borne heavily on friend as well as foe; he had involved the state in difficulties with a sister state which made political action hard and offered no corresponding return. Even in the school question he had extended to political opponents sympathy and assistance by which his political friends could gain nothing and might lose much. And further there was another point on which he and his party differed: the subject of slavery. He saw that the question of its abolition had, as he expressed it later, "become an element of the Whig party in the North." Hence he had opposed the nomination of Clay. But now, looking forward to 1844, he saw no second Harrison to save the party from this time making the choice. The nomination of Clay would cost thousands of Whig votes in New York. But the party would not listen to him, would not even strive for the conciliation of the Abolitionists.

So on his return to Auburn he was really retiring from politics more truly than had been the case before. When he had left the Senate, he had almost

immediately become a candidate for governor. Though defeated in that campaign, it had been clear that his turn would come soon. Now it had come to him, and the experience was at an end. He felt that his family and his business had claims upon him. The latter had, of course, almost gone to pieces. While he had been governor, he had been unable to keep up even the form of legal partnership at Auburn. Now he must start over again, as if from the very beginning: to hang up his sign and wait for clients or go out and look for them. Nor were his other affairs in much better condition. In earlier days he had invested in some real estate in Auburn, which in the growth of the city had somewhat appreciated in value. But his larger land dealings in Chautauqua County had not proved so successful. Before going to Albany, when he could give his time to the management of such matters, he had become a special partner with his old friend Trumbull Cary in the land venture. But having been unable to look after that business now for a long time, he had found himself more and more involved and finally seriously embarrassed. In fact, when he returned to Auburn in 1843, he faced a load of debt which he compared with that of Sir Walter Scott, and which he set about raising in the same way as Sir Walter, but fortunately with happier result.

He nailed up an old tin sign that he had and put a notice in the paper, saying that he would attend to legal business. The first client was a farmer whose fences had been broken down by a neighbor's

oxen. He did not at once find much to do, except giving advice gratis to old friends. But as time went on his practice increased, so that in March he writes to Weed, "My little law business has so engrossed me that I have been unable,"—as so often for other reasons,—to answer a letter. He began to earn as much as his salary as governor and that with an expenditure largely reduced. He was happy, so he wrote, much more so than while in Albany, because he had recovered a sense of pecuniary independence.[1]

His law business was chiefly in the state courts, especially the Court of Chancery, in which he felt himself particularly at home because it seemed to give him more of an opportunity to consider matters from the standpoint of pure equity. With his easy power of expression, he was a master in the drawing up of bills in chancery, and the carrying on of this part of his work occupied a great deal of his attention, though he also often went into court. At this time, however, he turned his efforts to a wholly different kind of law business, which, although it seemed at first to have no connection at all with his earlier occupations and special abilities, proved, as a fact, to be something for which he was particularly well fitted. This was patent law. James G. Wilson, the owner of patent rights, offered him a retainer on the strength of hearing him plead a case on some very different subject. Seward was doubtful of accepting. But he did accept and was

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 649. He goes on, "I suffered more from the privation of that than anybody knew while I was in Albany."

so successful that he very soon drew to himself a great deal of such business, which made quite a change in his life, for patent cases are tried in the United States courts, and necessitated his traveling all over the country. It was essential for him to become familiar with the patent law, and with the general principles of machinery. But when these matters were mastered, he found a very great satisfaction in the new branch of his profession, because it brought him into contact with the efforts of man to use the forces of nature in ways that had hitherto been quite unfamiliar to him. He had always been keenly interested in the prosperity of the country, and his earlier political positions, as has been seen, had, in the main, been decided by his attitude on canals and railroads and other internal improvements, because, living where and when he did, transportation was the great necessity for material prosperity. Now he began to see a little of a side of industrialism that he had hitherto known nothing about, and with his ready curiosity he found it exceedingly absorbing. Fortunately it proved profitable, too, and he began to think seriously of being able to pay off his debts, and the interest, with perhaps the principal, of his obligations in Chautauqua County.

Less profitable, when it came to laying up treasures on earth, were two criminal cases that Seward undertook. The first was that of Wyatt, who was on trial for murder. The facts were admitted and there seemed no reason why there should not be an immediate conviction. But Seward, who became

interested, was led to believe that Wyatt had been insane when he committed the crime. He sent for specialists to examine the man, undertook his defense, and though he could not secure an acquittal, succeeded in bringing about a disagreement. Not very long afterward another murder was committed by a negro named Freeman, a most cruel and unexplainable act; four people, a farmer and his family near Auburn, were butchered by the negro for no reason that could be conceived. Public feeling arose at once, and demanded punishment. People were not slow in imagining that the disagreement of the jury in Wyatt's case had encouraged Freeman to the murder. Seward, who was at the time absent, was held responsible for the suggestion of insanity. No one seemed to remember that, as the law took account of insanity, it was surely the duty of somebody at least to suggest the possibility; many regarded Seward as a public enemy. The case of Wyatt, coming up for a second trial, was hurried through rapidly. Before it was completed, Freeman was arraigned. He was deaf and seemed idiotic: he had been wrongfully imprisoned shortly before and in jail had been abused. He gave no intelligible answers to any question. Seward moved that he be examined before a jury as to his sanity before he was brought for trial. He was so examined, and, after long consultation, a verdict was given that the prisoner was sane enough to distinguish between right and wrong. It is hard to present an idea of the popular excitement in the case: it was creditable that the man was not imme-

diately lynched. As it was, the trial was continued. When Freeman was brought before the court, he apparently understood nothing of what was going on. The judge asked if he had any counsel, but he had neither counsel nor any comprehension of what counsel might be. Seward undertook the case. He was convinced that Wyatt was insane, and still more now that Freeman was insane. There was no denial of the facts of the killing: all that could be done was to argue once more the question of sanity when the act was committed. The trial lasted a fortnight or more and ended with a verdict of guilty. Seward had expected nothing else, but he was deeply pained at the irrational state of the public mind. He had, however, done his duty, though at the expense of enormous unpopularity. He was regarded as an enemy of justice, an enemy of peaceful living, an enemy of the human race.

Besides these very practical matters, there were others quite as absorbing. During the four years that Seward had been in Albany, the wind and the worms had played havoc with the many trees around his house in Auburn. He counted over a hundred that had been destroyed. He had set out fruit trees, and had lost, through neglect, almost one-third of their number. As soon as the snow had gone, he began to repair the damage. He went out into the woods and got elms and mountain-ashes and evergreens in large quantities. By the middle of May he summed up one hundred and seventy trees that he had set out in place of the old ones, besides great numbers of gooseberries and raspberries. To

his intense delight he was aided in these efforts by the appearance of the red-headed woodpecker, hitherto somewhat of a stranger at Auburn. The worst enemy of the trees had been a black worm that destroyed the beautiful locusts, then very common in Cayuga County. This worm, however, was, in turn, destroyed by the woodpeckers who this season gathered in Auburn in large numbers.

Of course Seward was not out of politics. He had given time and attention to public affairs for twenty years; he had been sent by his district to represent it in the Senate; he had been chosen by the state as chief-executive for four years. He had early resolved not to look for or accept appointive office and the condition of his own affairs forbade his thinking of politics with a view to taking an active part. Still he had been one of the founders of the Whig party in New York: he had been its first leader in early failure and its chief figure in days of success. Its general national principles,—internal improvements, a bank, a protective tariff,—he thoroughly believed in. They had long been the foundation of his political creed. Its state policy of canal and railroad extension he himself had done much to form. It is true that the party was not precisely what he wished any more than he was what the party wished. The Whigs would rather have had somebody who would have confined his attention to the particular matters that made a necessary part of his political creed. Seward had found himself forced beyond his party in various

ways. Still he believed in it, and its active leaders believed in him.

It was a serious time for this political organization. The death of Harrison and the treachery (so-called) of Tyler had showed the emptiness of the Log-Cabin campaign. The elections of 1842, which had mostly gone against the Whigs, indicated that a great effort would be called for in the presidential campaign of 1844, if their original plans and hopes were to come to anything. In one respect, however, though defeated, they stood in an excellent position: they were entirely at one in favor of Henry Clay. They were not only unitedly for Clay, but events seemed to be turning in favor of the renomination by the Democrats of Van Buren; and Van Buren had so many enemies in his own party that the Whigs confidently felt that if he were named, it was hardly possible that they should not beat him. In New York State, also, the Whigs, though routed in the election of 1842, had something in their favor. The victorious Democrats fell out with Governor Bouck "sooner than the Whigs fell out with his unlucky predecessor." [1] Bouck had been for many years a canal commissioner: now, though elected on the ground of retrenchment in canal policy, he proposed the continuance of work on the Black River, the Genesee, and the enlarged Erie Canals. A good proportion of the Democratic party opposed him. Here Croswell and Flagg of the old Regency separated. Croswell agreed with Governor Bouck and the general policy of the party,

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 648.

while Flagg led the Radicals, who not only proposed new financial ideas, but also demanded the holding of a convention for the revising of the constitution.

This disagreement in the Democratic party was, however, counterbalanced by certain movements which threatened to weaken the Whigs, and that in ways of great interest to Seward. In New York City there arose a political party which called itself the Native American party. Its principles will be gathered from the name: it was opposed to the granting of political privileges to new immigrants, and here its adherents naturally came into conflict with the Irish. They did not oppose Seward, for he was not a candidate for any office, but his position was well understood, and during the summer he found himself the central figure of political excitement. "Here are abusive Native American letters," he wrote to Weed,[1] "and in the same bundle glowing grateful letters from Irishmen unknown." The school question came up again and Seward's friends republished his statement of the case in the message of 1841. The agitation was not, of necessity, hostile to the Whigs, for they had not as a party supported Seward's policy in this matter. Many of them, indeed, had opposed it, and there were now Whigs who thought that this movement would turn to their advantage.[2]

[1] July 26, 1844. Hollister MSS.

[2] "On the whole I believe our friends look for salvation through a *miracle*, to be worked by the Native Americans in New York." Seward to Weed, Oct. 22, 1844. Hollister MSS.

This was not the case: the Native Americans elected their candidate for mayor in New York, but they took away from the Whig strength, rather than added to it. Seward, however, resolute in his opposition to them and firm in his friendship for the Irish,[1] was thereby more and more a detrimental influence in the eyes of many in his own party.

Another matter was of even greater political importance; namely, the anti-slavery movement. Seward was an open anti-slavery man, but he felt that his true place was with the Whig party. There were others, however, and more and more as time went on, who thought otherwise.

Though there is little evidence of it, anti-slavery was now a real issue in the state: Seward had feared that it might defeat him in his first canvass for the governorship. We have noted his statement[2] that so early as 1839 anti-slavery had become "an element of the Whig party . . . of great power for the strength or exhaustion of the party." At that time, anti-slavery men, even Abolitionists, were content to vote for whichever candidate best suited their ideas. In 1840, however, 2,662 Abolitionists voted for Gerrit Smith for governor; in 1842, 7,263 voted for Alvin Stewart. In 1844 Stewart was nominated again. An enthusiastic

[1] "I am writing a letter to the Young Friends of Ireland in New York, but shall take care to exhibit no unbecoming spirit, if I know how." Seward to Weed, Nov. 11, 1844. Hollister MSS.

[2] In a letter to Mrs. Schuyler, Nov. 13, 1844. Schuyler MSS. See note to page 180.

Abolitionist begged Seward to be the Abolition nominee for President, but he thought it an impossibility. Now came up a matter which put things in a new light; namely, the Texan question. The sentiment of the South favored immediate annexation; Tyler sent an annexation treaty to the Senate on April 22, 1844. Van Buren and Clay both put themselves on record as opposed to this course. Van Buren's chance for the presidency vanished at once. In the nominating convention he received practically all the Northern votes, while the South was resolutely opposed to him. Polk was chosen. The Whigs nominated Clay by enthusiastic acclamation before it was clear just what his position would be.

In New York these matters made Whig success in the state impossible. Fillmore had been pushed for Vice-President and when Frelinghuysen was nominated instead, he became a natural candidate for governor. Without other distractions, he might have been elected, for although Silas Wright was the strongest man the Democrats could have brought against him, yet dissensions in their party might have lessened his vote. But here were the Abolitionists; voters who ought to have been Whigs. They would have nothing to do with the slaveholder, Henry Clay, but (with others) nominated Birney, while they opposed Fillmore, and Wright as well, with Stewart. In 1842 Stewart had polled seven thousand votes: this year he polled twice as many. If his votes had gone to the Whig ticket, it would have been victorious; as it was, Fillmore

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was beaten by a majority of ten thousand, and Henry Clay by much the same vote. The vote of the state went to Polk and gave him a majority. "Mr. Clay's defeat is a sad and fearful event," wrote Seward shortly afterward.[1] It certainly was to those who thought with Seward; but the result made it clear that anti-slavery was a power. A visit of John Quincy Adams, his old leader, impressed the same idea on his mind. Still, though he definitely thought of himself as an anti-slavery man,[2] he remained a Whig.

The year after a presidential election gives a breathing space as far as national politics are concerned. In New York the popular interest was turned to the constitutional convention. As the Democrats were in a majority in the Assembly districts, the convention was made up largely of their party. Seward was not a member nor was Thurlow Weed. Seward was of the opinion that he would be a better influence out of the convention than in it. Neither he nor Weed could have brought about the particular reforms as to canals and suffrage that he had at heart, and, as he saw clearly, their presence might arouse factious opposition. But it was probable that he could not have been elected as a delegate from Auburn, for he was in the high-tide of his unpopularity in the Freeman case. He was asked to stand in Chautauqua and other districts but did not wish

[1] Seward to Mrs. Schuyler, Nov. 13, 1844. Schuyler MSS.
[2] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 706. "Look at the Whig party to-day: everybody knows that I am an anti-slavery man."

to do so. The convention acted in the main in accordance with his ideas, though not going quite so far as he would have advised: the suffrage was made almost universal; the judiciary was made elective; internal improvements were helped by financial arrangements; corporation laws were made general.

About this time Seward began to be called to Washington on business before the Supreme Court, and these visits were always of great interest to him, for they enabled him to keep his finger upon the major strategies of public life. In 1847 he was called there in the Van Zandt case, where he was associated with Salmon P. Chase in the defense of an Ohio farmer who had been sued for helping fugitive slaves. At Washington at this time all political views were obscured or clouded by the Mexican War. The successes of the army were arousing popular enthusiasm and it was clear that the returning heroes were to be a considerable element in the politics of 1848. In fact, in Seward's view, both Whigs and Democrats appeared eager to seize upon "Old Rough and Ready" as soon as he should have laid down his victorious sword.

In New York, however, events occurred that seemed to render such a capture needless,—at least for the Whigs. The Wilmot Proviso, which stipulated that there should be no slavery in any of the territory gained from Mexico, suddenly became an issue. The Whigs of New York declared in favor of it, but the Democrats could not do so. The re-

sult was that the party divided on the lines that had been begun under Bouck, and that had been drawn together only to elect Silas Wright. The Radicals or Barnburners declared for the Wilmot Proviso; the Conservatives or Hunkers would not do so. Each faction sent a delegation to the national convention. But the convention would grant complete recognition to neither, and the Barnburners withdrew. They held a meeting in New York City and subsequently joined with others in a convention in Buffalo, in which they formed the Free Soil party and presented Van Buren as a candidate for the presidency.

This was certainly a strange turn of affairs. It may have seemed possible that the anti-slavery Whigs, perhaps under Seward, would some time have been able to control their party, but who would have expected the Democrats to place themselves in an attitude of opposition to slavery? From the simple view of party politics for the year, things were admirable. There could now be no question that the Whigs would be able to elect Taylor over a divided Democracy, even though Van Buren took from them all the Liberty men. But how would it do for the Whigs to allow a third party—a Liberty, Anti-slavery, Free Soil party—to be formed in the state? It was widely felt that the occasion demanded a man and Seward was evidently the man demanded. He was an anti-slavery advocate and always had been,—no Northerner with Southern principles one election and a Free Soiler the next,—and yet he was an out-and-out

Whig, one of the first. So Seward was called on and he came out upon the stump not only in New York, wherever it seemed that there was a leaning toward Van Buren, but throughout New England. Everywhere he gave reasons for the faith that was in him, no longer feeling apologetic to the Whigs because he had anti-slavery leanings, but appealing to those who were agreed to see with him the importance of holding up the hands of the Whig party. The results were favorable. New York was easily carried for Taylor as was New England also.

And now as the Whigs in New York reflected upon their victory, a new consideration appeared. A United States senator was to be elected and he was to be a Whig. There was no one who in standing or principle could compare with Seward. Among the older public men he was the only one of those prominent in the twenties, to preserve his position. Weed entirely declined office; Spencer had become a Democrat; Granger, Tracy, and not a few others had retired from politics, some to private life, some to the bench. The only figure comparable to Seward was that of Fillmore, who had just been elected Vice-President. Seward and Fillmore were undoubtedly the chiefs of the party; in fact, they might almost be called the chiefs of rival factions. With some such idea in mind, it was suggested that the senatorship should go to John C. Collier, the second in command, as one might say, of the Fillmore wing. He was really the only other candidate thought of by the many who did not like the idea of an anti-slavery senator. There was no question of

any one else: some unauthorized person offered the nomination to the governor, Hamilton Fish. He declined to consider it: "As a true Whig," said the *Tribune*, "he could do nothing else."[1] Seward received an overwhelming majority in the party caucus and was elected January 31, 1849.

He stood in a curious position: a Whig senator from New York of indubitably anti-slavery principles. Everything had somehow come around to that. He had made his first steps in politics on the ground of internal improvements and an extension of the franchise. He had been elected to the state Senate to advocate internal improvements and the freedom of politics. He had been elected governor on the platform of internal improvements and a sound financial system. Now, however, those things were accepted: even among the Democrats there were enough advocates of the canal to assure prosperity, while the electoral and legal reforms of the constitution of 1846 had accomplished all that Seward had thought of. There still remained, however, the anti-slavery question. No one had thought of it in Seward's early political life: few had thought of it even as late as when he was governor. But he had become more and more convinced of its importance, and finally the times had come around to him. The North, at the end of the Mexican War, began to see that the forces against slavery must be put in some kind of order, and he was the obvious leader for this work.

[1] Jan. 23, 1849.

CHAPTER XI

UNITED STATES SENATOR

DURING the winter of 1848–1849, Seward was in Washington on law business before the Supreme Court. Everything seemed as it should be: "A Whig party dominant, El Dorado discovered at last, and perpetual summer."[1] The political occupation of the moment was Cabinet-making, in which Seward was but mildly concerned; so, as he left his own senatorial interests to his record and his friends, he spent his spare time with political acquaintance and in political writing and thinking. On December 22d he delivered[2] a carefully prepared oration on the "True Greatness of Our Country," which was highly admired by many of his friends as the best statement of his position and his principles. One will perhaps wonder how at such a time and place Seward could discuss the evils of slavery and that he should have spoken of the possibilities of secession. However that may be, the oration caused no surprise: he was already pretty well known for the opinions which it expressed. In January and February he returned once or twice to Auburn. The news of his election

[1] To Mrs. Seward, Dec., 1848, *Life*, Vol. II, p. 93.
[2] Before the Young Catholic Friends' Society of Baltimore.

as senator he received in New York City, and by the end of February was in Washington again, ready for the beginning of a new administration, and the opportunities of a new field of activity.

All seemed propitious. President Taylor was not a partisan, not even a politician; but a man of strong sense and determination to do right, a man of "good-nature, patriotism, and integrity," as Seward thought. There was, however, the possibility of serious disagreement. While a member of Congress, Fillmore had shown himself to be more of an anti-slavery man than was Seward at that time. He had generally supported Adams in his efforts to defend the right of petition. Later when anti-slavery began to connect itself definitely with questions of territory, he had become somewhat conservative, and he now represented a frankly different section of the Whig party from Seward's. So far as Vice-President and senator[1] were concerned, an understanding on the question of appointments was reached by the mediation of Thurlow Weed, and later it was resolved to refer cases of difference to the party leaders at Albany. The session was short and unimportant, no great difficulties arose over the patronage, and Seward was soon at home again.

In the fall he was once more in Washington, ready for serious work. The question of the admission of California had aroused the subject of slavery. The political situation was acute, the

[1] The other senator from New York at this time was Dickenson, a Democrat.

actors well known. The Senate was a noteworthy body. Webster, Calhoun, Clay, were there together once again and for the last time. Others of lesser fame but still well known were Benton, Douglas, Foote, Jefferson Davis, Corwin, Cass, Houston. Among the new senators the most interesting to Seward was Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, with whom he had been associated in the Van Zandt case. The Senate was Democratic, the House, Whig. But with the organization of the latter, it became apparent that discordant elements were about to give things a new aspect. Thurlow Weed said that the country had every appearance of a revolution.[1] Seward, though he did not take quite the same view,[2] saw that matters had reached a crisis. Affairs had been a little difficult in the spring, but merely on the partisan basis: now, however, more important elements were beginning to come in contact. They had long existed but only lately had they assumed a position of prominence. The last Congress had expired with violent disagreements on the subject of slavery in the territories won from Mexico. The new Congress opened in the same way. The Whigs had a majority in the House, but because Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, was nominated, some Southern Whigs would not support him and after a long deadlock, Howell Cobb of Georgia, a Democrat, was chosen. In the Senate the anti-slavery feeling blazed up on the slight

[1] *Life of Weed*, Vol. I, p. 596.

[2] A few months later, at least, he wrote, "I discover no omens of a revolution," March 11, 1850.

occasion of admitting Father Matthew to the floor.

But the main cause for the prominence of the issue was California. The discovery of gold there the previous year, only a few days before the treaty which had concluded the Mexican War, had given to a part at least of the territories gained in that proceeding a value which no one could have expected. California had at once attracted a great crowd of adventurers and had soon attained a population which made it seem advisable to form a state. The President, shortly after his inauguration, had said that it was his policy to invite the citizens to draw up a constitution and apply for admission to the Union. This had been done : a constitution was adopted in October ; the next month a legislature had met ; and by December senators had been elected. Such was the natural order of events to be objected to by nobody in the ordinary course. But one circumstance was of immediate importance : the constitution included a clause forbidding slavery. The subject of the admission of California at once became a battle-ground for the anti-slavery question. The first joining of forces occurred in the election of the Speaker of the House. Not till the House was organized, could the President send his message to Congress, reciting his own acts and the proceedings of the Californians. All that was needed was the confirmation of that body. This confirmation it would not give and here arose a political situation in which Seward saw himself called upon to play a more difficult part than had

yet come to him in all his public experience.[1] It might not have been so very hard to have played the part of an anti-slavery senator in ordinary times, but now that anti-slavery was somehow the chief issue between two parties, neither of which was willing to favor it, the case was certainly difficult.

The President's plan met with opposition and many modifications were suggested; these all passed out of immediate view when on January 29, 1850, Henry Clay proposed in the Senate the famous Compromise measures which he strongly felt offered the only solution possible for the safety of the Union. They were eight in number, but three only need be noted here. They were:

1. The admission of California with her free constitution.

2. The erection of territorial governments in other lands ceded by Mexico, without any provisions as to slavery.

3. A new law, making more certain the return of fugitive slaves.

From a practical, or at least a superficial standpoint, there was nothing here to alarm the North. The admission of California was simple right and justice. The leaving of the question of slavery to settle itself in the new territories was not only practicable, but also such as the North might desire; for it was becoming generally understood that the

[1] "My entrance into the executive office in Albany bewildered me, but that experience was nothing compared to my trials here." Seward to Weed, Feb. 2, 1850. *Life*, Vol. II, p. 121.

climate and the geographical conditions of New Mexico were such as to give no encouragement to slave labor. It therefore followed that if she became a state, she would, like California, make for herself a free constitution. A law concerning fugitive slaves was not, on the face, unjust, not such as necessarily to offend the North, for fugitive slaves had been returned since the establishment of the nation. Nor was the South especially favored: some of the minor points in the Compromise satisfied its demands, as the refusal to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but the others were not so satisfactory. The exclusion of slavery from California and New Mexico, though founded on a law of nature, rather than upon a law of the United States, was "deeply regretted" by some. Even a Fugitive Slave Law was of vital importance to the "border states" only.

But the trend of public opinion at this time favored neglect of such considerations as these, and the Senate at once became a battle-ground on which for seven months the subject of slavery was debated with vigor and with acrimony. It was a fortunate opportunity for Seward. He had been moving on anti-slavery lines for some time, but the question, although important, had never been so predominant as now. "Did it ever fall to the lot of any man," he wrote to Weed,[1] "in such a conjuncture of his own fame and interests, to fall into the Senate of the United States in such a national and legislative crisis as this?"

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 121.

Very shortly, however, he began to see clearly and to feel himself on firm ground. The great leaders announced themselves. Clay had presented the advantage of the plan he had proposed. Calhoun, in one of the last acts of his public life, opposed it. Webster, after long deliberation, acceded in a speech that, in the minds of many, closed his career as a statesman. A few days afterward Seward gained the floor, and defined his position. He was, however, already well known, and the mark for violent denunciation on the part of the South. Mrs. Seward, who was sometimes in the gallery, wondered that her husband could restrain himself under such attacks. Clay, she said, in speaking of one instance, occasionally smiled, Webster looked grave, and the Vice-President was fidgety, sometimes thinking he would interrupt the speaker, sometimes giving up the idea as hopeless. Seward now most certainly represented the anti-slavery element of the North.

His speech was more a statement of principles than an attempt to persuade. One can hardly imagine anybody in favor of the Compromise being led to oppose it by listening to him on this occasion. But the address was probably meant as a pamphlet rather than a speech,—as a definition of his position. It was a position that he shared with few. On the floor of the Senate Chase of Ohio and Hale of New Hampshire were the only members who were ready to support him. Outside of Congress, even at the North, public feeling began to tend more and more in favor of the Compromise.

Beginning by pointing out that California ought of right to be admitted, Seward then took ground against the Compromise: all legislative compromises were wrong (except when necessary) and here the demands of the slave party were entirely unwarranted. The speech was wholly unyielding in tone, and if, as has been thought, it indicated thus early Seward's course in the ten years that followed, it perhaps shows why that course did not serve to avert the Civil War. Seward could see nothing in the position of his opponents that ought not give way to his own careful reasoning.

The speech is a most noteworthy event in the life of Seward, in that it marked him for all time as an out-and-out anti-slavery man;—indeed, as almost an Abolitionist. Garrison and others had aroused the antagonism of many good people by their rejection of the Constitution or anything else that stood in the way of doing their duty by their consciences. Seward rather by accident emulated them. In speaking of the duties of Congress to the national domain, he said that "the Constitution regulates our stewardship." He then went on: "But there is a higher law than the Constitution which regulates our authority over the domain, and devotes it to the same noble purposes." He did not in any wise point out or assume that this higher law was contrary to the Constitution: in fact, his idea was that the Constitution and the higher law pointed the same way. But the expression fixed itself in the popular mind, and at once Seward became known as one who held that the Constitution and

the laws of the land were binding only when they were in accord with the laws of God. Of course, he had not propounded such a view, though we may guess what he would have said if some one had propounded it to him, or wonder what his objectors would have said if the real alternative had been presented to them. The outcry made even Thurlow Weed apprehend evil. But Seward felt that of all his speeches, with the exception of that in defense of Freeman, this was the only one containing nothing which he would like to strike out.

The Compromise debate continued through the spring. Various substitutes were suggested and Clay's proposition was not acted upon just as he had offered it. A committee of thirteen was appointed, composed of Clay as chairman and six Whigs and six Democrats, so arranged as to give the North and the South each six senators. It was to propose some plan of settlement of "all pending differences growing out of the institution of slavery." Needless to say, Seward was not a member of this committee.

It was an exciting session: no one could predict the outcome. May arrived before the committee reported a bill, which had so much in it that the President called it the "Omnibus Bill." Taylor, meanwhile, clung to his own plan. He had invited California to form a constitution and apply for admission to the Union, and California had done so. To his direct and soldierly mind nothing remained but to make California into a state without hampering the measure by connection with extraneous

matters. His relations with Seward were close, as they were with Thurlow Weed, who was occasionally in Washington. Taylor was in a position where he needed friends. He had been elected as a Whig, but he had never been very close to the politicians of the party, and indeed, before the election, he had announced himself willing to receive a nomination from the Democrats as well. When he became President, although a Southern man, he was soon brought to understand that he could not ally himself with the supporters of Southern principles; —at least, not with the more advanced wing. Indeed, some of them he roundly pronounced traitors. He was thus in no very strong position, when Clay and Webster, the leaders of his own party, came out definitely with a plan on the main issue very different from his own, and indeed attacked his plan violently and even arrogantly. He had troubles also in connection with his Cabinet. Still his proposal grew in public esteem, and Seward, who believed in it, began to be regarded as the leader of the administration forces in Congress. On July 2d he made a second speech against the Compromise and in favor of the President's plan.

On July 6th Seward called on Taylor and learned that he was ill: the next day he was no better. On the 9th Seward wrote to his wife: "I cannot omit to speak my dreadful apprehensions about the President. He is in extreme danger." That same day General Taylor died.

The event was indeed a sad and fearful one. Aside from personal considerations,—and the better

Seward knew Taylor the more he liked him—the President's death at just this time produced, or, at any rate, hastened, ominous political consequences. Fillmore at the outset was by no means clear regarding his course: "All is dark for him and for the country," wrote Seward,[1] "and there is not a ray of light to enable me to see through it." It soon began to be plain, and to Seward perhaps among the first, that the new President did not propose to follow the policy of his predecessor. Taylor had been a slaveholder, but he had surprised all by his attitude in regard to the Compromise. Fillmore was an anti-slavery man and he surprised the country no less.

The first event after the death of Taylor was the resignation of his Cabinet. All but one member were desirous of retaining their positions, in Seward's view, and he advised Fillmore to retain them. Weed came to Washington in the emergency. One thing was clear. Fillmore was a Whig, like Seward an old Anti-Mason, who, in the lapse of Anti-Masonry, had found a field for greater activity in the new Whig party. There was a fine chance at this moment for such a man to make a name for himself. Conditions were in favor of a gathering together of the sentiment of the North and presenting a strong and just anti-slavery policy. Seward, had he been in Fillmore's place, might have done much in this direction, but Fillmore did nothing of the kind. After some hesitation he decided to support the Compromise and offered the position of Secretary

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 144.

of State to Daniel Webster. "They do not see that a seam, once opened, will let in the flood and sink the ship," wrote Seward.[1] What ship he had in mind is not wholly clear. If he meant the Whig party, he was entirely right. The action of Fillmore did create a rupture which led to its destruction.

The party was at this moment at best in a doubtful situation. Like the Democratic party, it had been drawn together by political ideas and conditions in which slavery had no part. It had within it anti-slavery men, like Seward, and pro-slavery men like his fellow-collegian Toombs[2]: slavery was a matter aside from its policies. But slavery or anti-slavery was fast getting to be a matter which, though aside from Whig policies, could not be cast from the consciences of public men. We have seen in Seward's life how gradually he had come to a position where slavery was an active political factor, something which could not be neglected in political thinking and political acting. He was not the only public man in that position and he was not without following. We have seen how far he was able to carry the Whig party of his own state.

The Democratic party, more frankly pro-slavery, had met with the same difficulty in a more aggravated form, and the Free Soil movement had been the result. In New York it had divided the party almost equally; in the election of 1848 Cass had 114,318, and Van Buren 120,511 votes. In New England

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 146.

[2] Toombs was in the class of 1828 at Union, some years after Seward.

and Ohio the Free Soilers had gained in strength, and it had been Seward's task to hold the Whig party together in the face of this distraction. He had endeavored to show that anti-slavery men would do better to unite with the Whigs, than attempt to form a third party. On that issue he had gone to the Senate. And that principle, in spite of Clay and Webster and the Compromise, he had almost been able to carry one important step farther: Taylor in the fifteen months of his administration had gone many steps in the anti-slavery direction. But with his death came a decided change. Fillmore considered the political situation. The election of 1852 was not far distant: the older chiefs of the Whig party gained an ascendency over him; there was a considerable element of the party even in his own state which would surely support him. Fillmore made Webster Secretary of State, and Henry Clay became his spokesman in the Senate.

The effect of this was to throw Seward and men of his way of thinking into greater opposition. Hitherto he had been the target for the frank pro-slavery abuse, but so long as he stood for the plan of the administration he had a support by no means despicable. Now the administration was changed, and he was left to his own devices. There followed an exciting and exhausting summer both in Washington and New York. Not till the middle of September was an end made to the legislation which constituted the Compromise. One of the last measures to be passed was the Fugitive Slave Law.

Seward returned to Auburn in the midst of the

state canvass. Statesmanship was for the moment at a standstill: he had for seven or eight months used all the means in his power on the floor of the Senate to oppose this "final settlement of the slavery question," which was not a settlement and not final. Now the time for such activities was over. There was, however, yet a chance for other things. The state of New York could be organized to give her voice more effectively for the right. She could organize and let her strength be seen. She could take her true place in the councils of the nation. In Seward's mind these ends were to be attained through the Whig party. The Democrats were pretty definitely arrayed on the side of the Compromise. It is true that the Free Soil agitation of 1848 had divided them and brought about the election of Taylor. But in 1850 the party was gathering its forces again, and it was becoming apparent to the Liberty men that they should not find their help here. Was it with the Whigs? Seward was by this time clearly an anti-slavery man: but was he the leader of his party or was he in this respect merely an individual? He was a senator from New York, and having been more recently elected, he expressed the political sentiment of the state more accurately than Dickinson, his colleague. But the President also was from New York, and he was in favor of the Compromise.

It was necessary that some settlement should be reached, and it seemed as though Fillmore's relations with Seward and Weed would render it impossible for them to establish cordial feeling. It

soon became evident that a test of strength was to be made at the state convention in the fall. Seward, of course, was not a candidate for any office, but the occasion was one on which it would be natural for the party at large to pronounce upon his position. Late in August the *Republic* of Washington, an administration newspaper, began to print articles reflecting upon Seward. Advances were made to men of standing in the party to see whether approval of his course could be prevented, and whenever possible at the primaries delegates definitely opposed to him were chosen.[1] The convention met September 26th and nominated Washington Hunt for governor. He was a man of standing among the Whigs, a friend both of Fillmore and of Seward, and was clearly the nominee of both sections of the party. The contest arose on the resolutions. A committee of eight was appointed, of whom five were friends of Fillmore and three of Seward, although the convention was supposed to be made up in reverse proportion. This committee reported resolutions which declared that the Whigs were opposed to the extension of slavery but recommended a liberal spirit of toleration in regard to the conflicting opinions in the party. They further expressed confidence in the honest purpose and patriotic motives that had

[1] "At several polls a clamor was kept up against 'Seward' and 'Sewardism,' as if our Whig senator had been an aspirant to the governorship." New York *Tribune*, Sept. 19, 1850. "The way the custom-house officials made themselves conspicuous therein [at primary meetings] will not soon be forgotten." *Ibid.*, Sept. 30th. In the same article is an account of how Greeley was approached by the anti-Seward party.

actuated the Whig senator and representatives, but made no mention by name of any one save Fillmore. This was not to the mind of the convention, which reported the resolutions back to the committee, and the next day adopted a series which mentioned Seward by name and commended his action highly. On this William Duer, who had marshaled the Fillmore forces, arose and left the convention, with a considerable number of others.[1] Francis Granger, its president, made a short speech in which he resigned the chair and followed them. The bolters met, called another convention, which accepted the regular nominations, but dissented from the resolutions. They became known as "Silver Grays." The election was close and when, after days of doubt, Hunt was seen to be elected, it was by a very small majority over Horatio Seymour.

But a beginning had been made. In 1830 Francis Granger had written to an anti-slavery meeting, approving of its views. In 1844 the Whig state convention had voted in opposition to the annexation of Texas on the ground of its being slave territory. In 1847 the state convention had resolved against the extension of slavery, with Fillmore at the head of the ticket as comptroller. But now the situation was too acute. The Compromise, the Fugitive Slave Law,—these were beyond the

[1] About one-third of the convention. Greeley in the *Tribune*, Sept. 30, 1850, said that Seward had usually received the support of two-thirds of the Whigs. He had been nominated for the senatorship by a vote of 88 in the Whig caucus, out of 121 votes.

bounds of academic opinion. The Whig party was beginning to see what Seward had seen ten years before;—that one must take definite ground on the subject and hold it. The party disagreed as to what ground to occupy, although Seward was still able to control a majority, in spite of the Silver Grays. The state was with him: the Assembly was Whig and after long delay the legislature elected Hamilton Fish, an anti-slavery man, to the place in the Senate which had been held by Dickinson. At about the same time Charles Sumner was chosen from Massachusetts, and Benjamin Wade from Ohio, so that there were now six anti-slavery senators: Chase, Fish, Hale, Seward, Sumner, and Wade. The course of events had carried Seward into a new period of his career; he was becoming less and less a leader of the New York Whigs.

At the time of his election as senator, Seward had received a letter from Dr. Nott, his old college president, a man for whom he always had affection and esteem. The letter was remarkable for its insight into the political situation, and its knowledge of Seward. It urged him to be true to his principles, with due regard to the Constitution, and ended as follows:

"Whether for better or worse, Freedom will onward—at least I think so. But whether it will or not, you have no other way but to continue its calm, courteous, but unflinching advocate. With you the die is cast—you have crossed the Rubicon—and there is no recrossing it. Whether you will be

able to bring the party with which you have acted (up or down, shall I call it?) to the standpoint you have taken, I know not: but some party will be brought there, and it will become the predominant party; and with such a party only can you be in harmony." It needed less than ten years to accomplish the fulfilment of this prophecy.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEBRASKA BILL

"THE Democrats are in power in Congress, the Silver Grays in the administration." So wrote Seward as he returned to Washington for the session of 1851–1852. This meant a peaceful time in the government, whatever might befall elsewhere, for both were alike committed to the finality of the Compromise. It had put an end to the discussion of slavery, and the Democrats and the administration were determined that the dispute should not be revived. It was a difficult task, because, though there was no disposition to disturb the peace in Congress, there were many out of Congress who were not so well satisfied with the Compromise. These people were at the North and consisted chiefly of those who could not endure the Fugitive Slave Law. It doubtless seemed to Southern statesmen very unjust and unfair, when the North had been given a free California and freedom in the territories, in exchange for a Fugitive Slave Law, that Northerners should not acquiesce in the bargain. But the people are individuals. The Northern Abolitionist had had nothing to do with the bargainings of the Compromise, except to condemn them. It was nothing to him that the Southern statesmen were willing to allow

California to be free: California was already free by her own vote. It was nothing to him that they were willing to allow New Mexico and Utah to be free: they were practically free already by the conditions of climate and soil. That side of the bargain amounted to no more than allowing the sun to rise. But it was something to the Abolitionist to be forced to send back into slavery any black man that any Southerner chose to swear had been his slave. Even if he actually had been his slave, as was generally the case, it was wrong to do it; and if he were not his slave, it was intolerable. So thought the Northern Abolitionist, and so in these years there was a lengthening list of cases of riot and disturbance over the return of fugitives. Such cases were not at all to the minds of the Democratic and Silver Gray politicians. Just what the most advanced of either party really thought of them, it is hard to say. The out-and-out Abolitionist, of course, belonged to no party and was glad to do his best to break up either or both. But Free Soil Democrats and anti-slavery Whigs must have seen that they were gradually being confronted with the alternative of severing their party ties or giving up their principles. Seward's position was perhaps simpler. He believed in party: he believed that if he was to accomplish anything, he must accomplish it by means of the Whig party. He was a Whig senator, and if he had looked for instructions to the Whig party, he would have found a series of resolutions in the party platforms in which they had

declared themselves opposed to the extension of slavery, and nowhere would he have found any approval of the Fugitive Slave Law or the finality of the Compromise. In fact, his own course was commended. He had but to go on as before, and that with Hamilton Fish as a colleague, elected by Whigs whom the electors of the state had sent to the legislature on this very issue.

Such was the formal view. But actually affairs were somewhat different, and this real difference bid fair to split the Whig party. It was not merely a question whether Fillmore or Seward should control the Whig convention or the Whig legislature, or even the Whig electorate of New York. It was a question whether there were enough people in the country to support the old Whig principles, when this matter of slavery was in everybody's mind and everybody's mouth. The Democrats as a party were frank about it: they said, "Some of us do not like slavery, but we do not think that such dislikes ought to color our political action any more than it did that of our fathers." Those Democrats who did not feel so left the party on the Free Soil issue of 1848. But the Whigs could not go quite so far. The Northern Whigs, as we have seen, were made up largely of elements of opposition. They at first were an anti-Jackson party. As to the tariff and internal improvements, policies which the Whigs stood for, they were policies that, even in early days, had not really been party questions. The bank and the financial situation had been the matters of importance. Now, however,

the country had lived through the excitement about the bank, and suddenly wholly different issues had arisen with the acquisition of Texas, the settling of California, the opening of new territories. The "Mammoth," the moneyed aristocracy, the "Old Hero," had passed out of recollection; the overland route, the argonauts, "Fifty-four forty or fight,"—these were the things now in every one's mind.

They were the real interests of the people and they involved slavery. We can see the case clearly when we review Seward's course. Thirty years before he had looked upon the settlement of western New York, and the states of the Northwest Territory and had declared for internal improvements. Why not now, when the great West was to be settled, continue to see in internal improvements the paramount issue? Why, when there were railways to be built, mines and farms to be exploited, great deserts to be irrigated and vast plains to be forested,—why, in the face of such enormous possibilities in the West, stop to quarrel with the South over slavery? Seward would have agreed with Horace Greeley who said, at about this time, of some Whig resolutions in Kentucky: "The primary internal improvement needed by Kentucky is the abolition of slavery, and the consequent moral and social elevation of labor. That accomplished, other works of internal improvement would become easy. But schools, canals, and railroads make slow progress within the shadow of human slavery." [1]

[1] New York *Tribune*.

That had been Seward's view of slavery at the very beginning of his political career,[1] but in those days just after the Missouri Compromise, amid the insistencies of current conditions in New York, anti-slavery had not called with a very compelling voice. Now, however, the objects for which he had striven in his own state were largely attained: canals and railways, schools and law-courts, the right to vote and the extra-legal preliminaries to voting. And Seward himself, having passed from state to national politics, saw the United States as a whole where New York had been thirty years before, with the difference that in the new domain now open for settlement and improvement, there was the possibility of slavery. So Seward felt his chief duty to lie in opposition to its extension.[2]

Unfortunately, he could not induce the Whig party to think with him. The political event of importance at the moment was the nomination of a President. Each party, as a matter of course, now held a national convention. The Democratic nomination was a surprise to many: Cass, Marcy, Buchanan, Douglas were all passed over in favor of

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, p. 54.

[2] A matter which brings out the essence of the situation is that of the Pacific Railway. In the summer of 1849 Seward was invited to be present at a convention at St. Louis in favor of the project. It was just the sort of enterprise to enlist his interest and his sympathies, and although he could not go to St. Louis, he sent a letter expressing his confidence in the plan. As a fact, however, the greater number of those who favored a Pacific railroad at this time were in Missouri or Iowa, and the case was so complicated with settlement of the territories and bringing slaves into them, that Seward never could have acted with its projectors, even if nothing else had interfered.

Franklin Pierce. Of more immediate interest to Seward, however, was the Whig nomination. There were three candidates so prominent as to eclipse all others. Fillmore naturally desired to receive at the hands of the people the office to which he had succeeded at the death of Taylor. His ambition ran athwart the wide-spread feeling that Daniel Webster, indubitably the greatest man in the Whig party, was its proper representative in a national election. But Seward and many who thought with him could not act with Fillmore or Webster, for both had strongly favored the Compromise and since its passage, had stood for its finality. Their candidate therefore was General Winfield Scott.

In 1847 Seward had found himself in somewhat the same position. "You[1] made General Harrison President," said John Quincy Adams to him. "You can make the next President. Will you give us a man who is not for slavery?"[2]

At that time Seward wrote, on April 4, 1847: "General Taylor's last brilliant battles have produced a conviction among Whigs, and I think among Democrats, that he will be nominated and elected President." Earlier, however, when General Scott was mentioned as a candidate, Seward on January 6, 1846, wrote: "General Scott is the Whig congressional candidate for President." But he advised strongly against the nomination, seeming still to have in mind Henry Clay, the defeated

[1] More probably it was Thurlow Weed. See p. 152.
[2] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 38.

candidate of 1844, as had many others of both parties.[1]

Now, however, Taylor was dead, and Clay was at the very end of his long and distinguished career. Even had it not been so, Seward could not have gone with Clay more consistently than with Webster or Fillmore. He had for some time known General Scott well, and while it nowhere appears that he deemed him very admirably fitted for the presidency, yet he did think him a brave and an honorable gentleman. Although a Virginian, the general was opposed to the extension of slavery. Seward therefore pronounced for Scott.[2]

New York was an important state in determining the result. Webster might have been nominated if he could have added to his New England votes the votes of New York, plus a number in the South. But the New York delegation hung between Fillmore and Seward. By the end of May it was evident that the Silver Grays were discomfited and that the state favored Scott. The New York *Tribune* was at great pains to urge that the choice of a Scott delegation was not a Free Soil triumph; that "those who have worked to secure the present result in the state have from the first and throughout contended against mixing the slavery question in

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, pp. 772, 782.

[2] Thurlow Weed was at this time abroad. He did not believe in nominating Scott. He was sure that the Whigs would be beaten in 1852, and he would have preferred that Fillmore should have been nominated, that the people might have a chance to pronounce on his record. *Life of Weed*, Vol. II, p. 215.

either the nomination or election."[1] If Greeley here spoke for Seward, we may well wonder why Webster was not a better candidate than Scott. Whatever Seward himself thought, a Scott delegation went to Baltimore. The first vote showed that he and Fillmore were nearly even in strength, with Webster a bad third in the race. After forty ballots had been cast, it began to be clear that the Scott men would not come over to Fillmore. Arrangements were then made between the friends of Webster and of Fillmore to the effect that if Webster could get sixty votes in the North, the South would give him enough for the nomination. The Webster managers could count upon twenty-five votes in New England: with New York's in hand they would have had a triumphant majority. But Seward controlled the New York delegation and it remained firm for Scott, who was nominated on the fifty-third ballot by 159 votes, to 112 for Fillmore and twenty-one for Webster.

Here, as well as in New York, the question of a platform was important, and here the spirit of conciliation led to resolutions which practically endorsed the great Compromise: indeed, the nomination of General Scott had been brought about only by the reading of a letter from him to Mr. Archer, in which he was made to appear to add his personal endorsement. Seward, in spite of his influence in

[1] New York *Tribune*, May 21, 1852. Greeley may have properly spoken for himself, but hardly for Weed, who understood that the slavery question would mix itself in the election and that the Whigs would therefore be beaten.

the nomination, was sick at heart at the result. "I see, now, no safe way through, but anticipate defeat and desertion in any event." "I see the outburst of a spirit that comes periodically to mar the hopes of wise men." "The wretched platform contrived to defeat Scott in the nomination, or to sink him in the canvass,"—so he wrote[1] to those with whom he was intimate.

The canvass entirely justified his worst fears. In spite of the effort of the New York *Tribune*, probably the most influential paper in the country, to conduct it on the lines of protection, of river and harbor improvement, of development of national industry, the slavery question gained a predominating place in the campaign. It was clear that Pierce would take a pro-slavery view. But it was not clear that Scott would be any better; he would certainly follow the party platform, for to it he held that he was in honor bound. The Whigs were utterly defeated; they carried four states only. In New York the Democrats were successful by a small plurality and elected Horatio Seymour as governor.

There had been no such defeat since the Whigs had been a party. Even when they elected Harrison in a whirlwind of enthusiasm in 1840, Van Buren had received more electoral votes than did Scott in 1852. But it was not so much the overwhelming character of the defeat that was important, as it was the impossibility of united action afterward. It was not merely the difficulty of reconcil-

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 187, 188.

ing factions like the Seward men and the Silver Grays; it was the greater difficulty of principle. How could North and South act together on the question of slavery? Assent to it, said the Democrats, according to the compromises of the Constitution and of 1850; the most extreme slavery men will ask no more and no true Union man can refuse so much. But the Whigs, as a party, could not go even so far as that. Some of them felt that slavery was right, and that they owed it to themselves, their neighbors, and their states to defend it. Some felt that it was wrong and that they owed it to their country to do away with it by whatever lawful means offered. Between such, what compromises were possible? Neither side would be satisfied with any compromise except one based on its own view.[1]

What possibility was there for a political party formed of such materials? As long as slavery had been practically only an academic question, Francis Granger could vote for anti-slavery resolutions and still be a candidate for governor; Millard Fillmore could assent to anti-slavery measures and still be a Whig in good standing; Seward could even refuse to send the three sailors to Virginia, and still be a leader of his party. But now, when the far West was being populated, the question was no longer

[1] In the Compromise of 1850 (treating it as a bargain) slavery really gave nothing and got the Fugitive Slave Law. The North, on the other hand, relied upon the laws of nature in California and New Mexico and objected to making any concessions at all. The North, of course, had nature on her side, and must have won in the end.

academic: every new state meant two new senators against slavery; if nothing were done, its extinction was only a matter of time.

The year 1853 seemed to be marked by no political event of significance except the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law. But though nothing of an outwardly exciting nature took place, there was something else worth noting and that was the formation of the Know-Nothing or Native American party.[1] This political force appeared unheralded. Old-time politicians, Whig or Democrat, found the election of 1853 so different from their calculations, that it seemed as if some new factor must be present. But whatever political force had come into existence, it was certainly secret. If any one who might be supposed to be concerned, were asked, he said, "I know nothing about it." The phrase was so common that the new organization was quickly named the Know-Nothing party. Very definite principles were soon announced, the chief of which was opposition to immigration and naturalization, the enforcement of the principle of America for the Americans.

I find nowhere any early expression of Seward's views on this subject. Those who have followed his course so far will be sure that such a party and such a man would have regarded each other with mutual detestation. Seward opposed secret organizations

[1] A Native American party had existed before this time, in 1844–1845 (see p. 177), and even before that. It had had no continued existence as such, however, though doubtless many concerned in the earlier movement took part in this one, and perhaps the organization was reformed.

in politics and he favored immigration. The great though not the only objects of attack were the Irish Catholics who, as a rule, at least in New York, were Democrats. The Native American party, therefore, drew most of its strength from the Whigs. But its feeling toward the Whig party of New York was especially a feeling of opposition to Seward, because he had always advocated the freest and most liberal policy toward the immigrant. Here, as before, his real breadth of view and tolerance was a poor political asset, for his record as governor in the matter of schools and immigration turned Know-Nothing Whigs away from him, while it gained him no strength among the Democrats. Indeed, his position, even among the Democrats, was liable to easy misconception in the hands of any one who wanted a weapon. Thus Brady in the campaign of 1853 excoriated Seward before the Irish of New York City, because he had tried to be useful to them ten or twelve years before, by urging that they should have in the public schools teachers of their own faith and language. "What an advantage," said the ingenuous Irishman, "to sit on a school-bench with future fellow citizens of all nations! And this groveling creature would have deprived us of this privilege!" [1]

The Native American party, however, filled an immediate need: there were plenty of people tired of both Whigs and Democrats. Both parties had approved the Compromise, and it was not every one who, like Seward, would hold on in single op-

[1] New York *Tribune*, Nov. 2, 1853.

position, gaining an aid here and another there, in the secure faith that time would bring an opportunity for redress. To the average voter in the North, if he were dissatisfied with Whigs and Democrats alike, the Native American party was a matter of some interest, though it offered no solution of the question of slavery. But this apathetic condition of things was broken by an event of prime importance. On January 23, 1854, Senator Douglas, from the Committee on Territories, reported a measure that almost instantly absorbed the attention of all minds. This was the famous Nebraska Bill.

Of the country west of the Alleghanies a great part had formed the Northwest Territory, including the present states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. From this area, by the Ordinance of 1787, slavery was perpetually excluded. In the next great accession, the Louisiana Territory between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, the Missouri Compromise in 1820 had excluded slavery north of the line of 36° 30′. The status of the remaining portion, the Southwest and the Pacific slope, had been arranged by the Compromise of 1850. It had in general been felt that the distracting question was settled forever in the whole territory of the United States, and those who desired new fields for the extension of slavery looked to Cuba or to Southern California. The bill of Senator Douglas appeared with the purpose of organizing the territory of Nebraska, which included practically all that was left of the Louisiana Pur-

chase, and as shortly amended, provided that it should be divided into two territories, Kansas and Nebraska, and that each should admit or exclude slavery as its people should decide. The point that the Missouri Compromise clearly prohibited slavery in all the new territory was met by the view that the Compromise of 1850 in legislating for slavery south of the line of 36° 30′ had practically superseded the older rule of adjustment.[1]

The first feeling on the part of the anti-slavery North was an astonishment amounting almost to prostration. "I am heart-sick of being here," wrote Seward in a letter in which he announced the original form of the Douglas bill.[2] And later: "You see this infamous Nebraska Bill. It is an administration move." But soon it began to be clear that it was no mere political move. Whatever the result in the new territories, the principle of this bill implied not only the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, but also the repeal of any other of those principles that had been thought settled for all time. The North, said Seward, would before 1857 be "brought to a doubtful struggle to prevent the extension of slavery to the shores of the Great Lakes and Puget Sound."[3] Again he wrote: "Southern men begin to talk of repealing the prohibition of the African slave trade.[4] It would be no

[1] The bill, though fathered by Douglas, was the expression of a feeling very common among Western Democrats.
[2] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 216.
[3] Letter to New York meeting. *Life*, Vol. II, p. 218.
[4] By Act of Congress, in 1808.

more surprising to me to see that done than it is to see what I am now seeing."

When the true character of the Nebraska Bill became evident, there was an outburst of feeling throughout the North in newspaper, petition, memorial, and public meeting. The South, in the main, was in favor of the measure. In the Senate Houston of Texas and Bell of Tennessee opposed it. The North, however, was not entirely hostile to it: in fact, when the bill finally passed the Senate, there were recorded in the negative, beside the two mentioned, only Seward and Fish of New York, Chase and Wade of Ohio, Sumner, and subsequently Everett, of Massachusetts, Smith of Connecticut, and Fessenden of Maine. When the bill came to the House, after much discussion it was passed by a majority of thirteen. So approved, however, it was not the same as had been approved by the Senate, which therefore again had an opportunity to debate the subject, passing the measure this time by a vote of thirty-five to thirteen.

The Nebraska Bill served one good purpose: it made the situation clear. The Fugitive Slave Law had been the only measure of real importance in the Compromise of 1850, which bore harshly upon the North. But that law, at its worst, was only a carrying out (often in a rough and an unjust way) of a provision of the Constitution of the United States, which called explicitly for a return of fugitive slaves. Those who thought it wrong to return them were at least led to a serious consideration of the fundamental conditions governing North and South. Those

who disapproved of the means provided by statute for such return, might always bring the matter before Congress for adjustment. But the settling of the country on a free or a slave basis, the admission to the Union of free or slave states, was something that, once done, could never be undone by the ordinary means within the reach of men and parties.

The keen appreciation of the true position led to the true remedy. Heretofore the North had rested on paper guarantees. The Northwest Territory had been declared free, but it had also been settled by freemen, and no question had therefore arisen. California, and later Oregon, had followed the other course; they had been settled by freemen and had then declared themselves free. If the Missouri Compromise had proved itself but a paper prohibition, it was apparent that the Nebraska Law, while it was only a law, was no stronger. "Boston has suggested a practical plan," wrote Thurlow Weed in the *Evening Journal*.[1] "Let Kansas and Nebraska be immediately settled by freemen." So also said Seward in the Senate a few days later: "Come on, then, gentlemen of the slave states! Since there is no escaping your challenge, I accept it in behalf of the cause of freedom. We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas, and God give the victory to the side which is stronger in number, as it is in the right!"

[1] May 26, 1854. Quoted in his *Life*, Vol. II, p. 229.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

THE election of 1854 in New York was very close: party lines were disregarded, and the result was not certainly known for two weeks, during which time the returns fluctuated and hopes rose and fell. On November 9th, when it seemed as if the Whigs had been beaten, Horace Greeley wrote in the New York *Tribune:*

"The South took ground for Douglas's bill: the North very generally rose against it. In state after state the antagonists of slavery extension set aside the old party differences and party organizations, and united on the Republican platform to insist on the legal exclusion of slavery from the territories. And wherever that ground was promptly and frankly taken, the people have emphatically said, Amen. New York almost alone among the free states hesitated and hung back. Her people wished to join in the general movement, but too many of her politicians were not ready.

"The man who should have impelled and guided the general uprising of the free states lives in Auburn, and his name is William H. Seward. Instead, however, of taking the position which circumstances and his own antecedents seemed to require, Mr. Seward, adhering to the vacated shell

of Whiggery, has stood aside and allowed the great movement of the free states to go forward without a word of bold and hearty encouragement or sympathy from its national leader. The result is recorded in the returns of this election." [1]

The story of the rise of the Republican party has often been told. There had been, for some years, a feeling that the times called for the organization of a new Northern party [2] to champion the real interests of the country attacked by the slave power. The defeat of Scott in 1852 showed that the Whig party was not to be that party. With the passage of the Nebraska Bill the feeling began to crystallize, and in all the Northern states the Anti-Nebraska men, whether Whigs or Democrats, began to understand that the tie which bound them together might be stronger than the tendencies which would keep them apart. Their minds turned to fusion on the anti-Nebraska issue. It was in Michigan, at Jack-

[1] It was at this time that Greeley sent to Seward the well-known letter of Nov. 11, 1854 (to be found in *Recollections of a Busy Life*, p. 239, and elsewhere), in which he announced the dissolution of political relations between himself and Seward and Weed, on and after the coming senatorial election. Seward's comment, in a letter which he advised Weed to burn, was: "I judge, as we might indeed well know, from his, at bottom, nobleness of disposition, that he has no idea of saying anything wrong or unkind, but it is sad to see him so unhappy." *Life*, Vol. II, p. 239. Greeley had a very great desire for public office: he had wished to be nominated for governor in this campaign, and failing that, to be nominated for lieutenant-governor. Instead the Whigs had elected Henry J. Raymond, the editor of the New York *Times*.

[2] At the time of the Scott campaign the *Tribune* wrote, "What can slavery hope to gain . . . by thus doing its utmost to cause the organization of a great Northern party?" June 17, 1852.

son, July 5, 1854, that the name Republican was formally adopted.

This feeling existed in New York as elsewhere. The *Tribune*, as we have seen, had expressed the idea for two or three years. But the time seemed not yet ripe. New York, more than most states, was absorbed in party differences, and also distracted by the temperance question in the form of the so-called Maine Law. Greeley wrote on July 24th: "We have seen no indications that the great body of anti-Nebraska voters are prepared for this step [the forming of a new political party] and we are very sure that it has not been contemplated by a majority of the signers to the state call for the Saratoga [Whig] convention." After the convention, on August 15th, he wrote: "As to the proposed fusion of parties, the previous question is plainly this—Are the great body of the people prepared for such a fusion? If they are, then the time for it has come. But while nobody doubts that a great majority of our voters are immovably hostile to the principles and aims of the Nebraska Bill, in so far as it affects the Missouri restriction, yet it is not so clear that any majority at all are ready to abandon their old associations, forget their chronic differences, and unite for this one issue." It is probable that this is a fair view of the state of opinion in New York at the time. Greeley would have liked to have seen such a party; he was ready to head its ticket and lead its fight as candidate for governor, but he felt sure that the great mass of Whigs and Democrats were too closely held by their

party bonds. Nor did he know much, at this time, of the strength of the Know-Nothing movement. After the election was over, however, he thought that Seward should have aroused the feeling which he himself had not been able to detect.[1]

It is certainly a noble and an inspiring picture for admirer or biographer,—Seward arousing the resistance of the freedom-loving North to a sense of the aggressions of slavery, and leading the united freemen of New England and New York to join the enthusiastic West. But political judgment seems to have interfered even with the attractive visions of Horace Greeley, as did also a cold view of the public mind. For the moment the cause of freedom in New York had to be content with a Whig governor and legislature.

Seward himself believed that the public sentiment there was too much absorbed in minor matters and selfish interests to be able to make a strong front against slavery. On June 20th, writing to his wife, he speaks of himself as "unsustained by sympathy, among a people who cannot be recalled from trivial objects to look deliberately and sternly in the face at the means adopted for their own undoing by their own agents." And subsequently, when speaking of Know-Nothingism,

[1] So thinks Rhodes, *History of the United States*, Vol. II, pp. 68, 69, who believes that Seward might have done it with a few speeches. The next year, Nov. 8, 1855, the *Tribune* said: "Last year those who resisted the nomination of a distinct Republican state ticket, at Saratoga Springs, alleging that the people were not ripe for such a movement, were severely blamed for their timidity and mistrust. The result of the late canvass is their justification."

he says: "We shall probably have a year of 'No Popery' extravaganza; and then the contest between freedom and slavery will be resumed." It should be added that when he got to New Haven early in the summer, where he was to address the Phi Beta Kappa, he felt "the uprising of the free spirit of the North."[1] But judging from what is otherwise known of him, of Thurlow Weed, and of the political conditions of the time, there is little doubt his opinion was that the organizing of the Republican party in New York, at least by him, was impracticable. There was a strong anti-Nebraska element among the Whigs, and something of that element among the Democrats. There was also the Native American faction, and though Seward called it a danger to no one but himself, the fact that it was such imperiled any cause which he might lead. Seward was certainly admired by multitudes, in and out of his party in New York and elsewhere. But then he was more heartily disliked by a large element of his own party than any other public man in the state, both for political and for public reasons. The Fillmore men were political enemies; the Native Americans detested his public attitude. These two groups would certainly unite to oppose him. Probably Seward and Weed thought it better to gain a Whig victory and be sure of an anti-Nebraska senator in 1855, before beginning a movement which ought to lead directly to the presidential campaign of 1856.

Such at least was the course of events. Myron

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 234, 235.

Clark was elected governor by the slight majority of 277, because the vote of the state was divided among four candidates. Of these Clark, the Whig candidate, had a majority in twenty-nine counties; Seymour, of the "Soft" faction of the Democrats, had carried fifteen; and Ullman, the Native American, who came third in the popular vote, had carried fourteen. It was most noteworthy that those counties which gave Ullman a majority were situated in the western part of the state and were the very counties which twenty years before had been Anti-Masonic. From being intensely excited in opposition to secret societies in politics, they had become the strongest supporters of a secret institution, avowedly political, which even Masonry never was.

The complexion of the Assembly was very complicated. More than half of the members had been chosen by combinations. The condition of affairs is exhibited in the following table, which notes the elements supposed to be there represented. It is worth looking at, if only to get an idea of the problem offering itself to Seward's mind. It must be remembered that these figures stand more or less accurately for actual facts that were vital to a correct determination of policy.

MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY IN 1855[1]

Whigs	38
Maine Law and Whig	25

[1] This table is made up from the returns printed in the New York *Tribune* of Nov. 13, 1854. A comparison with the official list in the Red Book shows those returns to be not absolutely correct. Probably the Know-Nothing strength is underestimated, but the error is not of real importance.

Anti-Maine Law and Whig	6	
Know-Nothing and Whig	8	
Anti-Nebraska and Whig	1	
Republican and Whig	1	
		79
Independent and Maine Law	4	
Republican and Maine Law	3	
Know-Nothing	1	
Free Soil	1	
Free Soil and Know-Nothing	1	
		10
Softshell Democrats	12	
Soft and Know-Nothing	6	
Soft and Maine Law	2	
Soft and Anti-Maine Law	1	
Hardshell Democrats	7	
Hard and Know-Nothing	6	
Hard and Maine Law	1	
Hard and Independent	1	
Democrats	3	
		39
Total		128

As the Whig leaders examined these confused conditions, it was not at all clear that Seward could command a majority in the senatorial election. He needed one in each house: the Senate, elected the year before, had a Whig majority, but nobody could predict the vote of the Assembly. Though Seward could not feel sure of a majority even in the party caucus, there was no one else in either party to measure up against him. The Democrats naturally

opposed him and would have liked to have sent Dickinson back to the Senate. The Silver Grays also were hostile, largely under the guise of Know-Nothings, for reasons clear to all. But neither Silver Grays nor Native Americans had any candidate who could hold his own party or appeal to the people as could Seward. When it came to a choice, therefore, he had seventy-four votes to eighty in the Whig caucus, and the next day was elected by Senate and Assembly in joint session. He received eighty-seven votes out of a total of 160, of whom 157 were present, or a majority of seventeen over all others. Of the opposition votes about forty were cast by the Democrats, the rest by Native Americans. "Thus," said the New York *Herald*,[1] "after the severest contest ever known in the political annals of this country, has William H. Seward barely escaped political annihilation." The reason for this contest and opposition and danger of annihilation is very significant. It was proclaimed by F. W. Palmer in the Assembly, on February 5th, that he was for Seward on the slavery question; "but," he went on, "that question is not now open—while the other one, Americanism, is of paramount importance." When men could not only so think, but so declare in the legislature, it was perhaps as well that Seward had not come forward to put himself at the head of a united Republican party. It would seem that the North needed a little more persuasion. It was still a little too much like Hamlet, spurred up to intense ex-

[1] Feb. 7, 1855.

citement and unpacking its heart with words, and then becoming much interested in something else.

The needed persuasion was supplied in various ways, rather more effectively by the acts of the Southern leaders than by the arguments of the North;—by the Ostend Conference of the Ministers to England, France, and Spain; by the arrest of Anthony Burns; by the Missouri intervention in Kansas elections. One of the most important elements in the plan of action of the North was to fill Kansas with free settlers, and when it came to plain facts (instead of talk and bluster), it was pretty clear that the North must win in that particular struggle. It had many thousands who were willing to emigrate to Kansas, and their willingness was efficiently stimulated and often aroused by the Emigrant Aid Society and by other private agencies. Settlers were sent to Kansas from all over the North: in the South no such general effort was made. There were a number who came from Missouri, some of them with their slaves, as they had a perfect right to do; but it was not so easy for a slaveholder, presumably owning a plantation as well as slaves, to emigrate, as it was for a Northern farmer. The result was that in the long run, in spite of obstruction and violence, Kansas would be settled by the North.

The winter passed without important political event. Blue Lodges and Emigrant Aid Societies strove with each other in Kansas, but in Washington not much was done. It was the end of a Congress and although there was plenty of work,

there was little accomplished pertaining to slavery or anti-slavery. The session closed on March 4th, and Seward returned to New York.

The leading question was the organization of the Republican party, and Seward's position in this matter was largely conditioned by the aspect of politics in New York. Here the situation was one of great delicacy: the Whigs had carried the election in the fall, but their vote for Clark had been much less than that for the two Democratic candidates together, while the Know-Nothing candidate had polled a very large vote. The senatorial election had shown that the Know-Nothing influence was clearly against Seward. One or two incidents indicated the general tendency. In the senatorial election Littlejohn, the Speaker of the House, had taken the floor to advocate Seward's cause. He had been elected by a combination of Whigs and Know-Nothings. Shortly afterward he was hanged in effigy in Poughkeepsie.[1] At about the same time Moses Eames, a member of the Assembly, was a delegate to a meeting of the Native American Grand Council. Being upon the stage, he was asked how he had voted: when he answered for Seward, he was violently attacked, and had to be hustled out of the building by a back staircase. It was clear that any Seward movement would be strongly opposed by the Know-Nothings. When the senator himself returned from Washington in the spring, it was to the cheering news that the

[1] The effigy was cut down, very appropriately, by two Irishmen.

Know-Nothings had carried Auburn. "It is well enough," was his comment.[1] "The surest cure for a fever of that kind is to let it burn out." A little later it seemed that the Know-Nothing strength was failing. The spring elections appeared to show that in the choice of county supervisors, the Native Americans were generally falling behind the other parties. In many counties they were now in a minority. Even in Erie County, where the year before a whole anti-Seward delegation had gone to the Assembly, there were now sixteen anti-Know-Nothings to six Know-Nothings.[2] The position of the Know-Nothing party was one of very great interest. The movement had now spread all over the country. In the North there was a rumor that Fillmore had joined a lodge: it had been long understood that Know-Nothingism in New York was under Silver Gray influence, at least so far as the slavery question was concerned. In the South the order was having a hard time over the matter. In general, the plan was to put it entirely aside, but in the Southern states the leaders were forced to take some sort of position, and by refusing to come out definitely in favor of slavery, they lost Virginia in a hot election. In June occurred a very significant event: the Know-Nothings' National Council met at Philadelphia. Ostensibly it was a secret conclave,—the secret meeting of the ruling

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 249.

[2] New York *Tribune*, March 12, 1855. It must be noted, however, that the so-called anti-Know-Nothing vote was often half-Whig, half-Democratic, and not by any necessity all anti-Nebraskan.

body of a great secret order. Practically, it was the national convention of a political party. Although at first no one knew even where it was meeting, yet reports of its action were daily published to the great disgust and anger of the members. After a long session the important question was reached. The committee presented resolutions, and among them one declaring that the order wished "to abide by and maintain the existing laws upon the subject of slavery, as a final and conclusive settlement of the subject in spirit and substance." A minority resolution of a very different character was also introduced, protesting against slavery in the territories.

Discussion at once became active and violent. Mallory of New York asked, "if every one would not submit to the majority." Governor Gardner of Massachusetts rejoined that if the majority resolution were passed, neither he nor any other Northerner would accept it. Many bitter things were said, among them the remark of Senator Wilson of Massachusetts to the effect that "William H. Seward had his heel upon the necks of the dough-faces of New York, and would crush them out, so soon as the people could get a chance at them." On the other hand, James W. Baker noted that New York had expelled thirty thousand of the order for voting for Seward men, and had a hundred and eighty thousand left.[1] The convention passed the resolutions,

[1] He was not far wrong: the Know-Nothing vote in the fall was 141,000 in an election where the other parties polled only about three-fourths of their usual strength.

and the next day the delegations from all the Northern states, except New York, walked out of the hall.

This decision cleared the air. It left the Know-Nothings of New York a distinctly Silver Gray party: it no longer had any appeal to the man who held anti-slavery to be an important issue. There was then nothing to oppose the welding of all anti-slavery men into one organization, whether Abolitionists, Free Soil Democrats, or Anti-slavery Whigs. It no longer seemed right, however, that this organization should be the Whig party, for many who wished to join it might differ from the Whigs upon questions of the tariff, the banking system, internal and harbor improvements.[1] Nor did it seem right to nominate a straight Whig ticket. Perhaps the party leaders had thought over Horace Greeley's comment on their action of the previous summer. "The Whig convention," said the *Tribune*, November 9, 1854, "passed capital resolves all pointing to fusion and proceeded to nominate an entirely Whig ticket. This was like asking a friend to join you on a picnic, and yourself eating all the mutually supplied viands, before he could arrive."

As the summer went on, there were all sorts of inharmonious and conflicting occurrences of which one can now hardly see the right relation. In Cleveland in June there was organized a body called the Know-Somethings, an American order which took strong anti-Nebraska ground. Its political power was quite

[1] Matters which the *Tribune* in the campaign of 1852 had tried to make the true Whig doctrine.

unknown, although it appeared in New York[1] and Massachusetts, as well as in Ohio. It was apparently in favor of Seward, but it made no nominations. In July, Ohio and Indiana held state conventions which adopted the name Republican. In the same month the body appointed the year before at Auburn, as the Republican General Committee, called a convention in September of "all citizens opposed to the legislation admitting slavery into Nebraska and Kansas." The Abolitionists held their convention and took up a collection for John Brown. Washington Hunt, who had been elected governor in 1850 by the Seward Whigs, wrote a letter advising against fusion with the Republicans. The Know-Nothing convention in August tried to straddle the Nebraska question. The Softshell faction of the Democratic party aimed to put it to one side.[2]

Seward was still doubtful. He thought it by no means certain, and even hardly probable, that the plan would work out completely and safely even in 1856. He saw that he would be an obvious candidate for the presidency.[3] He was not sure that he wished to be President and was quite sure that he did not wish to be a candidate. Still he felt that

[1] July 31st, at Rochester.

[2] The New York *Tribune* said on Sept. 1st, "The Know-Nothings resolve that it should not be. The 'Softs' resolve that they don't like it. The People resolve that they won't stand it."

[3] Thus in 1854 the New York *Times* (June 1st, cited by Rhodes, Vol. II, p. 68) declared that he would probably be elected President "by the largest vote from the free states ever cast for any candidate."

the Whigs were impossible companions for him any longer and that there was nothing to do but go ahead. And the course was certainly the course of right, even if also of danger.

Arrangements were therefore made for a joint convention. Whig delegates were chosen to one body and Republican delegates to another. Each convention met separately, and nominated a ticket: then the Whigs marched into the Republican convention, where it was jointly resolved that the ticket be presented to the state as Republican, and that the new party take that name. Of the candidates four were Whigs and five Democrats. It was twenty-one years since the convention of 1834 in which the Whig party in New York had organized for its first campaign. They had six times elected their governor in eleven elections. Seward had been their standard-bearer in their first campaign, and although not successful then, he had four years later led the party to victory. He was still the party leader, though he had passed from the field of state interests to the larger field of national politics. But so had everybody else by this time, and if Seward was now standing for policies very different from those of 1834, it was because the development of national ideas had finally brought to the front essential questions of policy. But here as formerly Seward was still a leader, in fact as well as in theory.

So soon as the fusion was completed, he was called upon to speak for and to the new party. Among the many ratification meetings was one

held at the Capitol at Albany in which Seward for the Whigs and General James Nye for the Democrats, made addresses. In spite of the pouring rain, a crowd was present to listen with interest and enthusiasm to Seward's views. It was a sound, well-reasoned speech, but most characteristically confined itself to the economic and political aspects of the case. Beginning with a reminder of the memories of the political past that hung about the place wherein they were assembled, he turned directly to his subject. "You, old, tried, familiar friends," said he, "ask my counsel whether to cling yet longer to traditional controversies and to dissolving parties, or rise at once to nobler aims, with new and more energetic associations." He began, then, with an analysis of the situation. The question was, should a privileged class of men be permitted to take to themselves the control of the greater part of the nation? That privileged class was the slaveholders. He traced the growth of their power. Clearly they should have no privileges beyond others: the present evil, which pointed to more to come, was intolerable.

But no revolution can be carried out except by organization. And what organization is possible here? We must have a national party. Shall we take one that exists: the Know-Nothing, the Democratic, the Whig? None can satisfy us: but true Democrats and true Whigs are ready to unite on the sound principles common to both. The Republican party is the party for us.

The time and the subject, however, called for

something more than speeches. The Republicans were beaten at the polls and the Democrats as well. There was only a small vote, but the Know-Nothings came out about 10,000 ahead.

A careful analysis of the returns shows some of the causes. In New York City the Republicans had but 6,000 to the Know-Nothings' 20,000, a vote in itself enough to settle the election. Elsewhere in the state the result was unexpectedly favorable. The year before the western counties had almost all been Know-Nothing: this year they were almost all Republican. In the eastern part of the state, with a few Democratic exceptions, there was a string of Know-Nothing majorities. "Sam,"[1] though beaten out of his stronghold, had been able to open up new territory.

Seward, his mind fixed upon senatorial struggles, viewed the defeat with philosophy. "A year is necessary to let the cheat wear off," he wrote. "The Know-Nothings will inevitably disappear in the heat of the great national contest." "The heart of the country is fixed on higher, nobler things. Do not distrust it."[2]

The time has "fully come," wrote Greeley in the *Tribune* of November 8th, "for laying aside all old party distinctions until we settle the question."

[1] Know-Nothing party was so called.
[2] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 259.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRESIDENCY

As Seward returned to Washington in December, 1855, he felt the sort of relief that comes when all final preparations are made, and one is ready for work. With the formation of the Republican party a definite point was won : a period of transition was passed, a new period of activity begun. In 1850 Seward had stood almost alone among the Whigs in the Senate, opposed not only by the Democrats, but also by Webster and Clay, the senatorial leaders of his own party, and shortly by Fillmore and the whole strength of the administration. The Compromise of 1850 had passed, but instead of being a settlement, it had led to more disturbance. The Whig party in New York had split upon it, Seward's own action being the immediate rock that caused disaster. He found himself and Chase joined by others,—Wade, Hale, Sumner, Fish,—but still he could not carry the Whig party with him either in Senate or House: he was an ultra, a radical, a bugbear to the conservative souls who wished to pursue their ways with the least friction. The Nebraska Bill had given strength to the anti-slavery cause in the country and to the anti-slavery group in the Senate, so that now Seward saw the minority

rise to thirteen, but the political conditions of five years before could not be restored. The turmoil was increased by the Know-Nothings, who offered the very means of confusion needed by conservatives at the North,—a chance to cloud the true issue with some other matter that had enough good in it to attract many conscientious men, who might thus be used by the unscrupulous. And to Seward this appearance was doubly evil because it was directed especially against him. By means of it he occupied the position of the most-hated man in the country: hated at the South for his sympathy with the slave; hated at the North for his sympathy with the immigrant. He had been without a party behind him. The Southern Whigs had become his most violent opponents.

Now the situation had been cleared of all this confusion. There was the Republican party and its plainly-stated issue: opposition to the extension of slavery. That was Seward's own position, and although the Whigs had been unable to come up to it, there had gathered, after the wreck and dissolution of old political associations, enough to make him feel that he was no longer an unaided knight-errant, but rather a trusted champion of thousands of his fellow citizens. The feeling of the country was right: all that was needed was to organize to meet possibilities that could be foreseen, and to await the course of events.

With such ideas Seward returned to Washington, where he now had a house on G and 21st Streets. This made a great change in his life, for

he could have his family with him. His library began to take on a more familiar air; his writing-chair on one side of the fire, the portrait of Dr. Nott over the mantle, recalled old habits and customs and gave a temper and an atmosphere to his work.

It is during these years of his term as senator that Seward stood more definitely before the country as a great man than at any other period in his career, though in reality he was not so much himself then as he was at times before or afterward. He was a successful leader of what had once seemed a forlorn hope, but which gradually became a victorious march. Not the only leader, however, and often not in sympathy with his colleagues or his followers, he stood somewhat apart from both, to be regarded with admiration rather than affection. It was almost a commonplace that he was not understood. His personal letters show that he often felt himself alone. Two persons, about this time, have recorded impressions of him that are worth remembering. Carl Schurz, coming to Washington in his earlier days in America, looked eagerly for Seward as he watched the debates in the Senate. "There was to me something mysterious in the slim, wiry figure, the thin, sallow face, the overhanging eyebrows, and the muffled voice," he writes, and goes on later: "But he made upon me, as upon many others, the impression of a man who controlled hidden occult powers which he could bring into play if he would. Indeed, I heard him spoken of as a sort of political wizard who knew all secrets and who commanded

political forces unknown to all the world, except himself and his bosom friend, Thurlow Weed, the most astute, skilful, and indefatigable political manager ever known."[1] There is no doubt that Seward was a politician and understood many political secrets, but a reading of his intimate letters to Thurlow Weed fails to convey any such impression of him as that of Carl Schurz. He once wrote to Weed, "You see the politicians, I only the people."[2] He may have referred to the current circumstances only; he may to some degree have been self-deceived. Yet his own view of himself was more correct than that of Jefferson Davis with whom in 1858 he became intimate. Mrs. Davis says that his was "a problematical character, full of contradictions, but a very attractive study to us." Perhaps she was here right, but she had certainly misunderstood him when she added, "He frankly avowed that the truth should be held always subsidiary to an end, and if some other statement could subserve that end, he made it."[3] It is hard for us to believe anything of the sort; we know that Seward was only too willing to sacrifice for what he held to be right and true.

When Congress assembled, Seward renewed his oath of office as senator from New York. But he now stood in the Senate in a new character: he had been a Whig of anti-slavery opinions; he was now a leader of the Republican party. That party, in

[1] Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, Vol. II, p. 34.
[2] July 27, 1844. Hollister MSS.
[3] Mrs. Davis, *Life of Jefferson Davis*, Vol. I, p. 583.

the Senate, was not strong but Seward had more with him than six years ago when he and Chase stood alone. The House, however, reflected national sentiment more accurately, and showed a considerable anti-Nebraska majority. The anti-Nebraska men unfortunately were not all Republicans, and it was not merely days, but weeks and almost months before they managed to elect their candidate for speaker. It was February before N. P. Banks was chosen, and throughout the winter with an unorganized house, little public business could be done.

Outside the legislative chambers, however, there was much to be managed in a political way. It was the year of the presidential election and the leaders of the new party and every one else were careful in their consideration of available candidates. The Native Americans early declared for Fillmore. But they were no longer the power that they had been: it was certain that many would join the new party. In Seward's mind the matter had perhaps more importance than with any other. From the simple, ideal standpoint, he himself was the most obvious candidate for the Republicans. He had great powers and great experience, greater indeed in general opinion on these matters than any other man in the party. He was further and indubitably pointed out as leader by the fact that for six years he had been the acknowledged representative of anti-slavery ideas in the upper house of Congress. No one else could be thought of as a candidate from such a standpoint, with the exception of Chase, who

had stood side by side with Seward on their first appearance in the Senate. If the Republican party meant to go before the country simply on the anti-slavery issue, on the immediate issue of preventing further extension of slavery in the territories, then Seward was clearly the man. This he himself felt, and it was a very general feeling. But could the party go before the country upon that one issue? If it were necessary to present a ticket that would attract Democrats on the one hand, and Native Americans on the other, then it would be wiser to offer some one who had not a record which would repel them both. Seward felt this, and so did Thurlow Weed. It appeared best to make the nomination on the ground of expediency. Victory with Seward was possible only if the party could carry the whole North: with him as candidate every Southern vote was lost before the election, and many Northern votes were in doubt. It is not known just what he himself thought at this time. His intimate letters,—for instance, those to his wife and Thurlow Weed,—show that while he saw the political expediency of another nomination, he yet half wished for a chance to head the Republican army himself, even if he must be defeated at the first attack. Weed probably felt sure that Seward could not be elected: it is possible that he believed strongly and honestly that his chief was more truly himself as a senatorial leader, than he could be as President. However they felt, neither made any effort to solidify the Seward influence in the party, and public affairs soon made

such advance as rendered him less available than before.[1]

The chief object of interest in public affairs was, of course, Kansas. The Republicans called themselves, or had been called, anti-Nebraska men, from the original bill proposed by Douglas: but by this time Nebraska had ceased to be a subject of immediate interest and the question before the country was Kansas, slave or free. A free state constitution had been adopted at Topeka the year before. But it had been impossible to carry out peaceably the terms of this constitution, and the territory was the scene of continued violence. The Democratic party, by the voice of the President, condemned the free state activity as revolutionary, and urged a policy of military repression. The greater part of the session in the Senate was taken up by debate of the terms under which Kansas might be admitted as a state: Douglas made the administration proposal and Seward offered a substitute providing for the immediate admission of Kansas under the Topeka constitution. Events in the territory proceeded with more vigor, reaching the high-water mark of excitement in the attack on the town of Lawrence and the sacking and burning of the free state property in the place. This event occurred toward the end of May, not long before the conven-

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Seward's name was not presented. Personally he would have preferred to have directed the fight.[2] If the Republicans were to be beaten, it would have been a satisfaction to have held up the colors in the contest; he would have still been the leader. If the Republicans were to be defeated with another

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States as a nation was safe, and he was convinced that it would be done away with in a manner contemplated by the framers of the Constitution, if it could be restricted. We have seen how this view only gradually took a leading position in his mind. He came into the anti-slavery movement late: he had formed his political principles, his political methods, his political associations before anti-slavery became a public matter. The foundation of his political system was what had been called internal improvements. But measures for internal improvement demanded sound politics and sound finance, so Seward opposed the Regency and Jackson; and he became successively an Anti-Mason and a Whig. Then came the great decade of immigration. Seward at this time saw as clearly as ten years afterward, that immigration, if rightly dealt with, must kill slavery. Hence as governor he became unpopular on the public school issue. But here he aroused the Native American feeling which reached a head in 1844 and beat Henry Clay[1] in Pennsylvania and now was ready to beat Seward himself.

So the campaign for Frémont began, and Seward, as often before, took the stump and did what he could to bring about the election of the party leader. Frémont was not elected but he showed that the Republican party was the party of the future. The Whigs were memories only; the Native Americans carried but one state; the Democrats carried the whole South and six of the free states.

[1] In Seward's opinion.

With the election came a lull in political excitement. Had Frémont been chosen, the result four years afterward might have been very much changed. But with the election of Buchanan, the Democratic party North and South felt that at least the *status quo* would be maintained, while the Republicans were willing to stop a moment for breath before continuing the struggle.

An event of importance occurred this year in the passing, under Seward's introduction, of a bill for giving government support to the project of laying an Atlantic cable. Though our interest is much absorbed in Seward's position on the great question which for so long divided the nation, yet he himself in those days did much to forward other projects. As Greeley had said, the greatest internal improvement the country could have was the abolition of slavery. Seward was beginning to think so too, but there were other internal improvements of the kind to which he had pledged his earlier interests, and had lent a ready aid. He was a member of the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and we often see him in the Senate explaining bills for improvements along these lines, sometimes coming into curious companionship with such men as Stephen A. Douglas.

Soon after the inauguration of Buchanan occurred an event of equal or greater importance, the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Dred Scott. This decision, while it stated that the case was out of the jurisdiction of the court, added the view of the court to the effect that a descendant of negro

slaves could not be a citizen of the United States; that the Constitution recognized the right to hold slaves; and that therefore the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because it had forbidden slavery in the territories.[1] This opinion was clearly seen to be political rather than judicial. Seward believed it to be part of a carefully contrived plan of the slavery leaders. He devoted himself to considering "a political program, with a view, if it shall be wise, to bring it out, at some time during the season, as a relief and direction rendered necessary by the Dred Scott case." Some concerted action appeared to be necessary, for at first sight it rather seemed as if the Supreme Court had taken away the foundation of the Republican party. That party had been formed in opposition to the extension by Congress of slavery in the territories. This decision declared that Congress had no power at all to deal with slavery in the territories. The Democrats, including even Douglas, approved of this view. It might seem that he would have looked with regret upon the destruction of his theory that the territories themselves should decide either for or against slavery. If Congress had no power over slavery in the territories, neither had the territorial governments which were creations of Congress. But Douglas held that there was nothing in the decision inconsistent with "the great principle of popular sovereignty."

[1] More accurately the decision pronounced the Compromise (which had already been repealed) to be unconstitutional because the Constitution recognized property in slaves, and gave Congress no more power to deal with this than with any other kind of property.

Other eyes than his, however, were viewing what seemed an inconsistency, as appeared when he met Lincoln in the debates in Illinois a year afterward.

Douglas found that though his favorite principle could weather even the disapproval of the Supreme Court, it had a less fortunate course with the administration. The Lecompton constitution had been drawn up and was to be submitted to the vote of the people of Kansas in such a way that they could accept it with slavery, or without slavery. Those who wished to reject the constitution itself, however, had nothing at all to say. The President determined to recognize such submission. Clearly this was not popular sovereignty, and Douglas was manful enough to say so, though he were against his party. "The President," wrote Seward, "has avowed his purpose of betraying freedom in Kansas. Douglas, Stewart, and others intimate their purpose to resist, although indirectly, and on very narrow ground. The friends of freedom see room to save it through this division." The next day, December 10th, matters were clearer and Seward was astonished. Douglas, who had been the cause of the triumph of slavery by his Nebraska Bill, was now to join the opposition which Seward and at first only a few others had maintained. "Henceforth," he wrote, "Douglas is to tread the thorny path I have pursued." With these and other such ideas in mind, Seward prepared a speech for the chief debate of the season. On March 3, 1858, he spoke to crowded galleries.

Eight years ago, he said, in spite of the Wilmot Proviso, we passed the Compromise of 1850. Four years ago we gave up our previous mode of governing the territories and adopted the doctrine of popular sovereignty. To-day we have the same question once more. "Thus," he went on, "an old and unalterable lesson is read to us anew. The question of slavery in the Federal territories, which are the nurseries of future states, independently of all its moral and humane elements, involves a dynastical struggle of two antagonistic systems, the labor of slaves and the labor of freemen." This was Seward's position in a nutshell. We shall not suppose that he was blind to the evils of slavery on more general grounds. But he had long been a public man and he had long been accustomed to view these matters from the standpoint of public law. The public law of the United States permitted slavery to exist in such states as desired it. That, in Seward's mind, did not make slavery right, but it did estop him from trying to interfere with it in those states by such means. He did not, like Garrison, wish to do away with the Constitution, because it allowed slavery; he did not, like John Brown, wish to attack slavery where the Constitution allowed it. For his whole active lifetime, he had sought national good through the forms of the law of the land. And that law usually concerned economic or political conditions. Hence Seward always dealt with slavery as an economist or a statesman, recognizing higher law but moving along the path of constitution and statute.

So this speech gave a history of the Federal policy in regard to the territories, and looked to the future with the significant remark that "the white man needs this continent to labor upon." What Seward said in this address, as in others, was well founded and generally wise; it was based on history and principle, and avoided political personalities. He rarely aroused hard feeling by what he said, and where he failed to persuade, it was usually because by the circumstances in the case he spoke to deaf ears.

Speeches of this sort were appropriate to Congress, where the business of men is to make laws for such definite conditions as may arise. Outside, men can properly talk more freely. It was with this feeling, perhaps, that Abraham Lincoln shortly afterward stated his long and well-considered view of the slavery question in the telling figure of "a house divided against itself." The country could not exist half slave and half free: he believed that it would eventually become all free, for slavery, he said, was too great a moral wrong to continue. In the debates with Douglas that followed, the "Little Giant" attacked this idea and Lincoln's expression of it over and over again, but Lincoln had considered it well and defended it. In the fall Seward stated his own view in a way equally telling and equally characteristic. Lincoln in his Scriptural phrase summed up the question in what seemed a sort of moral conception. Seward spoke as a statesman when he called it the "irrepressible conflict," and as an economist when he

pronounced it a strife between two systems of labor. Free labor and slave labor, said he, have for ages struggled with each other. Now, just as Napoleon viewed Russia and said that ultimately Europe would be either all Republican or all Cossack, and indeed viewing exactly the same conflict in this country, Seward said, with Lincoln, that in time it must be either all slave or all free.

The events of the winter revealed another lull in political activity. The Republicans might well have been satisfied with the elections, for they showed a considerable gain over 1856. The Democrats, on the other hand, saw a breach in their ranks. The Amistad case, though arousing some excitement, was clearly a side issue. The bill for acquiring Cuba was entirely in the line of Southern policy; but it necessitated no immediate attention.

Seward was more concerned with the Pacific Railroad bill, the Homestead bill, the establishment of the overland mail, the appropriations of land for state universities. These were the things he was positively interested in: these things were for the advantage of the people. Slavery was a negative matter. He fought against it with his whole heart: but were that fight over, what would be the result? Merely that the great West would be where it would have to begin, as Seward had seen western New York begin, to build up its civilization from the forest and the prairie. As he had long since at Buffalo pictured in his imagination the growth of the states around the Great Lakes, the Erie Canal

being in a manner the symbol of that growth, so now he would have gladly looked across the prairies, and the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific slope, and indeed beyond the Pacific Ocean, to face the problem of civilization and progress there. His chief powers were expended in the slavery struggle, but he welcomed the opportunity to help forward these other plans, as important in the present generation as the Erie Canal and the Erie Railroad had been to New York the generation before. Most particularly did the Pacific railroad attract his attention. A bill for a railroad to the Pacific had been before Congress since 1852: Seward had introduced one himself and had voted for several others. He had been a member of the committee to which those bills had been referred. One or two extracts from the speeches he made in favor of these projects are worth quoting. On April 18, 1858, in discussing Dr. Gwin's plan, he remarked: "It is by means of a Pacific railroad and telegraph that we are to realize . . . a republican government extending itself across a continent and maintaining its sway peaceably and justly." Later in the year, on December 21st, he said: "Let us not deceive ourselves. There is no destiny that secures, and will, in despite of our own errors, vices or crimes, perpetuate this inestimable Union." He went on to point out that without a railway the country stood in danger of division into two republics, one on the Atlantic and one on the Pacific.

In the spring of 1859 Seward took advantage of the vacation for a tour abroad. He traveled over

Europe, Egypt and Syria, enjoying and observing widely. He was greeted everywhere with distinguished respect.

While Seward was still away, though about to return, there occurred an event of very great importance. On October 19, 1859, the country was startled by the news that there was a slave insurrection in Virginia, and that the insurrectionists had seized the arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Quickly the report spread that the leaders were John Brown of Kansas and a few followers, and that their object was to free the slaves; then it was learned that John Brown and his men were besieged in the railroad roundhouse, and later that they had been captured. The excitement was intense, but it was not long at fever heat. It soon appeared that there was no wide-spread conspiracy; that John Brown was but an individual aided by a few other individuals; that the slaves in general had no idea of rising; that the North in general had no idea of helping them to do so. John Brown was tried and executed. The half-disapproving, half-sympathizing view that many in the North had of this wild breaking in upon the conventional notions of order and common sense, began to settle into a grim feeling that perhaps some such drastic, if fanatical, remedies would be necessary before the slavery question could be done away with. At this time, of course, the politicians laid hold of the matter. It was clear that John Brown had had friends at the North, notably Gerrit Smith of New York. It transpired, too, that "J. R. G." had taken stock in the enterprise, and

Joshua R. Giddings was naturally accused. Indeed, all Black Republicans were under suspicion. In the fall appeared the letters of Forbes, which seemed to indicate that Seward had been sounded as to the plan as early as the spring of 1858.

These, however, were, for the most part, merely election rumors. The struggle this year was over some state officers. The Republicans had nominated a ticket and so had the Democrats. The Know-Nothings had endorsed four of the Republican and five of the Democratic nominees. The Republicans hoped to defeat the combined opposition and nearly succeeded. They elected six officials, all those who had been endorsed by the Know-Nothings, and one of the four who had run against the Know-Nothings and the Democrats. But for the first three names on their ticket they fell about one thousand votes behind the combined opposition.

Congress met on December 1st. Little business was transacted, for, as upon several previous occasions, the House came to a deadlock on the election of speaker. On December 28th Seward arrived at New York. One hundred guns, the usual political salute, were fired in the Park. Friends went down to meet him in spite of the severe weather; he spent a day at his favorite Astor House. As he journeyed home on the Central, he was warmly greeted at every station by crowds of citizens, and in a few days he was back in Washington.

Here he could not but notice a difference of feeling. Seward had heretofore always been on pleas-

ant terms with his political opponents.[1] Now it was remarked that the Southern senators held aloof and would hardly speak to him. Washington was full of John Brown excitement, for the Senate had appointed a committee to investigate the matter and every day brought forth something that stirred men's feelings. The South was outspoken, as it had been once or twice before; the Republican attempt at coercion would break up the country. "You may elect Seward to be President of the North," said some one, "but of the South never!" Seward waited for a good opportunity, and finally on February 29th spoke on the admission of Kansas under the Wyandotte constitution.

The address was recognized by all as an important one. Congress and the political world crowded the Senate chamber. Seward himself felt the significance of the occasion. It was said that he trembled, as he spoke, with the sense of responsibility. The speech aroused different feelings. The Abolitionists were disappointed: they appealed from Seward in the Senate to Seward on the stump, from Washington in 1860 to Rochester in 1857, from "union and liberty" to the "irrepressible conflict." The South was not reconciled: it was still felt that even though Seward might have had nothing to do with John Brown personally or with his raid, yet

[1] At the time of the Nebraska agitation, Carl Schurz, looking from the gallery, said that "as he moved about the floor of the Senate chamber, [he] seemed to be on hardly less friendly terms with the Southern senators than with the Northern." *Reminiscences*, Vol. II, p. 33.

that he was the prime instigator and director of the movement which made John Brown possible. The Republicans, in general, however, warmly approved of the speech: "Whether Governor Seward shall this year or ever be a candidate for the presidency is not for us to decide," said the *Tribune*;[1] "but whether he shall be or not, it is of vital consequence to the Republican party that it be universally read." The writer urged the distribution of one million copies, and subsequently about half that number were circulated by the paper itself.

A few days before, the *Tribune* had given a very favorable account of another speech; namely, that delivered at the Cooper Union on February 27th by Abraham Lincoln. "No man," it said, "ever made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience." Lincoln had been spoken of as a candidate for the presidency: indeed, many persons were mentioned at this time, the *Tribune* itself being non-committal, but inclined to favor the candidacy of Edward Bates of Missouri. As to Seward as a candidate, that paper was very dubious. What was, in truth, revolving in the mind of its editor, no one knows. He had four years before dissolved what he had called the political firm of Seward, Weed and Greeley, but the fact was not made public, nor do the other so-called partners seem to have taken serious thought of the matter. Whatever Greeley's opinion, what the *Tribune* said[2] was this:

[1] March 1, 1860.
[2] Dec. 26, 1859.

"While we should like right well to elect a President of his [Seward's] stamp, we have never favored his nomination for that post, because we have never been able to figure up with any confidence the votes wherewith he had been elected. . . . As yet, according to cool calculation it has not been within the power of Governor Seward's friends to make him President, wherefore we have resisted his nomination."

It is very probable that this expressed a part at least if not all of Greeley's views at this time.[1]

Thurlow Weed, however, thought differently. He had in 1856 advised against Seward's candidacy, but now circumstances were changed. The Republican party was no longer an experiment: it had taken the place of the Whigs in national opposition to the Democratic party, and it showed signs of greater power than its rival. It had grown in influence in New York State, as we have seen, and in the country in general, its strength, though certainly not superior to that of the Democrats, was yet considerable. It was further probable that its opponents could not muster their full numbers. They were divided between Senator Douglas and the South. It seemed impossible for the conflicting elements to be reconciled, and the course of events led to the expected result. The Democratic conventions divided and two candidates were nominated; Douglas, on the one hand, and Breckinridge

[1] Greeley was as cautious about nominating Seward for President in 1860, as Weed had been about nominating Greeley for Governor in 1854.

on the other. In spite of the nomination of Bell by the Union party, it appeared that neither Democratic candidate could overcome the vote of the united Republican party.

The convention was held in Chicago. New York sent a strong Seward delegation : the New England states were chiefly for him, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas (still a territory) and California, were entirely so. Pennsylvania was largely for Cameron ; Ohio for Chase ; Indiana and Illinois for Lincoln ; Missouri for Bates. The result is well known. On the first ballot Seward stood far above a number of favorite sons, though without a majority. His support increased but slightly and on the third ballot the convention nominated Abraham Lincoln.

This was a very great surprise and disappointment to Seward's political friends and to himself. It was ascribed to a number of causes, notably the course of Horace Greeley, who had attended the convention with a view of supporting Bates on the ground that Seward could not be elected. The misunderstanding of 1855, between Greeley and Seward and Weed, now came to public knowledge and was angrily discussed and criticized. Such matters are the minor strategies of politics and they disturbed Seward but little ; the defeat itself, however, was a very great blow.

Though disappointed, he bore up finely. He had seen such things before, had even anticipated them, sometimes, in his own case. He had seen Henry Clay put aside for Harrison in 1840, and again

for Taylor in 1848, and Webster for Scott in 1852, and in each instance he had approved,—indeed, had been an active factor in the result. He had yet later seen Van Buren and Marcy and Cass stand aside for more "available" candidates. He had observed these things and commented on them, and had fortified his resolution and strengthened his courage when he himself in 1856 had given place to Frémont. And now that the blow had come to him with final force, he found himself able to rise above his defeat and still to view the future cheerfully.

Yet in spite of his personal attitude, we cannot fail to see that he and his political friends had more than personal feeling in their disappointment and chagrin. The occasion was a crucial one: the election of the Republican candidate was probable, and the results of the election might be most serious. Threats of secession had been made for a long time, in case a Republican President should be elected. No Republican President had been elected, but now there would probably be an opportunity for the fire-eaters to make their promises good. And in such a juncture it is not remarkable that Seward should have felt that he was the man for the hour. He had had much political experience, and after many years of public life, he was known as a man in whom wisdom and principle were the ruling powers. He had long stood for the ideas that had brought the Republican party together. There was no one living who had preceded him as the champion of anti-slavery in national public life. And he had long been a recognized leader. He naturally felt

that he was the man to cope with the situation. It nowhere appears that there was the wide-spread feeling of confidence in the ability of Lincoln, which seems to us a matter of course. He was, indeed, almost an unknown quantity, for though he had sat in the state legislature and in Congress, it had not been for long, and his service had done little to establish public confidence in him. He had been spoken of for Vice-President in the convention of 1856, and had come into wide public notice in his debates with Douglas. It was then natural that it should have been regarded as a wholly proper step when Lincoln, shortly after his election, offered the position of Secretary of State to Seward, who in this place doubtless felt, and many of his political friends with him, that he would still be an important element in determining the policy of the administration.

CHAPTER XV

CIVIL WAR

We have formed some idea of Seward's state of mind and heart on receiving and considering the news from Chicago, and his accommodation of his own hopes and ambitions, and his thoughts on public policy to the inevitable necessities of fact.[1] The presidential nomination had gone to another, and he had acquiesced in the opinion of the majority. But he probably recognized that the decision, though not designedly, was yet in fact, an end to his hopes. Under ordinary circumstances his course would have been plain: he would have retired to private life on the conclusion of his term in the Senate. He felt that he had done good service for the party and the country. The ideas for which he stood had become accepted principles. His work was practically done and he could ask for his discharge.

But the time was not an ordinary time; it was one of the greatest tension and danger and very probably these ideas never occurred to him. The Southern leaders in and out of Congress had threatened secession if a Republican President

[1] He wrote to Weed, Nov. 18, 1860, "I am without schemes, or plans, hopes, desires, or fears for the future, that need trouble anybody in so far as I am concerned." *Life*, Vol. II, p. 478.

should be elected. Now that a Republican President was elected, South Carolina took the lead in carrying out these threats. Immediate arrangements were made for the election of delegates to a convention; the convention assembled, and on December 20th an ordinance of secession was passed. It was clear that other states would follow her example. An extraordinary situation was hereby created, unlooked for by the makers of the Constitution. The President whose election had caused these events would not be at the head of affairs for several months, and in the meantime the government was in the hands of his defeated opponents. These were not slow to use every opportunity in their power. It was necessary then that the President-elect's political friends, and in this case all friends of the Union, should make up by wisdom and activity for the advantages that were held against them. Of Lincoln's political friends, Seward was the obvious leader; he was the chief Republican senator and already selected as Secretary of State. It was natural that he should feel it his duty to return to Washington as soon as possible, to effect whatever he could by way of direction and advice.

For the moment he had no plan of action, although he was beginning to decide upon one.[1] Thurlow Weed had proposed a convention of the people to consider the demands of both sides, but

[1] December 1st: "I begin to see my way through." December 2d: "I am busily engaged in study and gathering my thoughts for the Union."

the idea came to nothing; even Seward spoke of it as "impulsive" and would not commit himself to it. The House of Representatives appointed a compromise committee of thirty-three, and the Senate, for the same purpose, one of thirteen, on which were placed the chief senators of their respective sections and parties;—Seward and Wade, Toombs and Davis, Douglas and Crittenden. But neither committee, though various plans were offered to them, was able to come to agreement upon any compromise.[1] Buchanan in his message considered the condition of affairs, showing conclusively, as Seward with unaccustomed satire wrote to his wife, "that it is the duty of the President to execute the laws—unless somebody opposes him—and that no state has a right to go out of the Union—unless it wants to." As the winter went on, other states followed the example of South Carolina, and passed ordinances of secession. Seward became aware that the movements for breaking up the Union in the country at large were aided and abetted in the Cabinet. Events in South Carolina or Mississippi were before the public: not so well known were the official acts of Floyd, the Secretary of War, and others, whereby the army and the navy of the

[1] The most important was that of Crittenden which practically agreed upon 36° 30′ as a line separating slavery in the territories and left new states to settle the matter as they chose. The radical Republicans would have nothing to do with this plan, nor did Seward ever support it, although it was long hoped that he might agree to it. Like Lincoln, he probably thought that it would accomplish nothing save a present accommodation.

country, with its military possessions and stores, were put in a position where they would be most useful to the secessionists and least useful to the incoming administration. But these latter steps went rather farther than even Buchanan could justify, and in January occurred changes in the Cabinet whereby definitely Union men, Dix, Stanton, and Holt, were given positions, and with them Seward soon got into cordial relations.

While he used every effort to counteract the exertions of the enemies of the Union and to help its supporters both in office and about to be in office, he also addressed himself to the country at large. In his speech in the Senate on January 12th, he said especially that he spoke less to the senators than to his countrymen in general. To them he presented the history and the necessity of the Union. The time for discussion of slavery was, in his opinion, passed for the present: it had brought about a crisis in which the question became that of national existence. Some form of government for the people of America was necessary. He showed that that form must be the Union, one government rather than several. What occasion had arisen for demanding that that Union should be dissolved? The election of Lincoln. But was this one event in any wise unconstitutional, illegal, or even extraordinary? By no means: it was such an event as was provided for by the Constitution, one which if disagreeable to the majority could be reversed in the future in a constitutional way; and as dissatisfaction with the election was based wholly upon the

opinions which were thought to have become dominant, he would consider some possibilities of better understanding. He affirmed, then, that slavery within the states and the return of fugitive slaves were constitutional; that mutual invasions of states by citizens of other states should be made definitely illegal. As to other matters in dispute, such as slavery in the territories, it would be well in the near future when present passions had subsided, to consider whether constitutional amendments could not be made. Lastly he urged that whatever physical bonds were possible, "such as highways, railroads, rivers and canals," should be improved and encouraged, as for instance, the Pacific Railroad.

The plan was in some ways very characteristic. But although Seward's address was listened to with attention, it pleased nobody. A fortnight afterward, as he was speaking in the same tone, he was asked what offer he could make, if such a proposition was not accepted, and even his most conciliatory words could not veil the fact, which was clearly put forward by a senator from Virginia, that the only alternative was war.

The last months before the inauguration of Lincoln were confused and anxious. The states which had already seceded were inclined to rest on their arms and await the action of the new administration. If it should attack them, they could fight for their liberties; if it should not attack them, their object was accomplished in their own way. The Southern states which had not seceded, the so-called border states, were still in doubt: in several the

disunionists had had very little success. The administration of Buchanan had no policy except to defend the property and maintain the positions of the United States until the government should be assumed by the new administration. The latter did not exist in any definite form: its members were designated and ready to act, but they had no agreement or coherence, no real power even of consultation. Seward could do little more than maintain his own hopes of a peaceful solution and as far as possible encourage others. A "peace convention" was gathered at Washington, with representatives of most of the states which had not seceded, among them some eminent men. Its general plan was certain further concessions to slavery. The convention offered the outcome of its deliberations in the form of an amendment to the Constitution, but nothing at all resulted. Seward would gladly have had it continue its sessions, for, though he had no confidence in its power to recommend any suggestion of value, he said that at least during its deliberations things remained as they were.

It was an anxious and a nervous time for those who wished to maintain the Union;—a time in which no one knew what to do, though every one had some plan; a time when nobody had any real responsibility, although everybody wished to do something. Nobody made a reputation; the wisest were at fault. Nobody could control the situation. Seward's object was to reach the fourth of March without an outbreak: he called himself a bridge-builder. His hopes were realized. On

February 9th Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens were elected President and Vice-President of the Confederate states of America; on February 18th they were inaugurated and entered upon the discharge of their duties. But Fort Sumter and Fort Pickens still remained in the hands of the government and it seemed that no overt act would occur on either side.

The inauguration came at last and Lincoln took the oath of office as President. He delivered an inaugural address in which he stated that slavery in the states was not to be interfered with and that the Fugitive Slave Law was to be enforced. But the Union he held to be perpetual; no state could lawfully secede. The next day the President sent to the Senate his nominations for the Cabinet. They were at once confirmed. The newly appointed officers took the oath and held their first meeting.

The membership of the Cabinet had been long in the President's mind, though not all of the number had been long definitely chosen. Seward had from the first been thought of as Secretary of State. His old senatorial companion, Chase, was Secretary of the Treasury. The War and Navy portfolios were given to Cameron of Pennsylvania and Welles of Connecticut. The Secretary of the Interior was Smith of Indiana. The President had desired to appoint some representative of the South, but it was hard to find a prominent man who was not an opponent of his policy. Edward Bates of Missouri and Montgomery Blair of Maryland were named Attorney-General and Postmaster-General with

something of this idea in mind. Of these seven, three,—Seward, Smith and Bates,—had been Whigs before the formation of the Republican party: the others had been Democrats. If the Cabinet was representative of different parts of the country and different phases of political feeling, it had in it also other elements of political discord that perhaps could not have been avoided. Before Lincoln had been nominated, Seward and Chase (not to mention Cameron and Bates) had been rival candidates; they were leaders of different elements in the party. Now that they found themselves together in the Cabinet, there was a good deal of the old rivalry. It could hardly have been otherwise. The two men were former leaders of anti-slavery sentiment in the Senate: leaders in the formation of the Republican party. Even had they themselves been wholly without personal ambition or feeling, they were each representative of a differing disposition, conservative or radical, that was very wide-spread throughout the country.

In beginning any administration there is an immense amount of official routine which must always be gone through with, from presenting foreign ministers to appointing postmasters. All this had somehow to be accomplished by the new President and his advisers, while they were determining what was best for the nation in the very critical condition in which they were placed. Things were still hanging in the balance: the border states had not seceded; the flag still floated over Sumter. But this balance could not be long kept.

Clearly the first question of importance was that of Fort Sumter. It was now three months since Anderson had been practically in a state of siege: the rebels in Charleston had not attacked him, but he had advised the War Department that he had supplies to hold out only a short time. As Lincoln turned from the hopes of his inaugural address to the facts presented in his office, he learned at once that Fort Sumter could be maintained but a few weeks at most; that an attempt to provision or relieve the garrison would be a doubtful possibility, unless an expedition on a large scale were planned, which would undoubtedly arouse the strongest resistance not only in South Carolina, but throughout the seceded and border states. On March 9th the matter was laid before the Cabinet to the astonishment of some who could not understand how such a condition of things had been allowed to arise.

It seemed that the only possibility was the abandonment of the fort, which was the advice of General Scott, who was much depended upon at this juncture. On the other hand, the President could admit this possibility only as a last resort. No one would understand the circumstances, and it would appear mere feebleness. The friends of the Union would be disheartened and its foes encouraged. The Confederacy would gain its ends and still be on the defensive. Lincoln asked the advice of his Cabinet. Chase and Blair agreed with him that an attempt to reinforce ought to be made. Seward, however, could not agree: to make such an attempt would begin a civil war, and

that at just the moment when the border states were hanging in the balance. The true policy was conciliation. Cameron, Welles, Smith, and Bates coincided with Seward, though not for the reasons that seemed important to him. Lincoln had on foot a plan for temporary relief, but did not want to push it in the face of this advice. He contented himself, therefore, with sending messengers to determine the feeling of Anderson himself and of the authorities at Charleston.

Seward was led to his opinion partly by his great desire for peace; partly by his overrating the Union sentiment in the border states which made him think peace possible; partly by his feeling that the question of slavery could and should be for the present put out of consideration. He had for some time made clear his view that it must be set aside while the Union was in danger. He would not concede anything beyond what was provided by the Constitution, but he thought that it was foolish to discuss whether there should be slavery in remote territories still uninhabited, when some of the oldest states of the Union had withdrawn from what they called the "Federal Compact."

At this time there were in Washington certain commissioners of the Confederate states. They rather counted on being able to come to some understanding with Seward. They inquired of him through Mr. Hunter, a senator from Virginia who still retained his place in the Senate, whether he would give them a formal interview. Seward, after consulting the President, sent word that he could not

receive "the gentlemen of whom we conversed yesterday." Those gentlemen then sent a formal note to the State Department, asking for an official interview. This note Seward would not answer: he prepared instead a memorandum which he filed in the department. In this memorandum he stated the obvious fact that the Confederacy was not a foreign power and that the commissioners had, therefore, no standing and no reason for either seeing or being seen by him. He thus talked to himself, as it were, and allowed the gentlemen to listen. They listened, through their secretary, and being politicians with a good idea of the nature of the administration, they thought that there was still opportunity for some action; in fact, they believed that there was such misunderstanding in the Cabinet as might enure to their advantage. They therefore remained in Washington, trying by various means to gain recognition. They carried on with Seward through third persons, a good deal of negotiation in which they declared that he shamefully deceived them. It seems that he was not quite the monster of guile that they pictured him, although things did not go as they thought he had led them to believe.

In Virginia a convention was still deliberating upon the question of secession. So also in the other border states: even Arkansas was undecided. It was important that these states be retained in the Union. But of course the Southern party was influential in every one, and how to strengthen the hands of the Union party was a difficult problem. It was a time for diplomacy, it seemed, rather than for action.

By the end of the month as Seward revolved all these occurrences in his mind, he came to the conclusion that in spite of the change of administration, things were by no means as they should be. He had been in Washington for four months, a season of unexampled nervous tension, at first using all his efforts to hold off decisive action until the new administration should begin. Now the new administration was well installed, but what had been accomplished? It is probable that at this time Seward had not come to an accurate knowledge of the character and methods of the President.

Accordingly, he noted down his view of the case in a paper which he left for Mr. Lincoln's consideration. He pointed out that almost a month had passed and yet, though unavoidably, no definite plan for home or foreign affairs had been adopted. He offered his advice on each topic. He urged that the administration should for the moment set aside the question of slavery and take the definite position of maintaining the Union. In carrying out this idea, he suggested preparation for a blockade, and a maintenance of "every fort and possession in the South."[1]

Respecting the attitude of foreign powers, he would demand explanations from France and Spain, standing ready, if these were not satisfactory, to de-

[1] It is not clear that he included Fort Sumter. The case of Fort Sumter, he said, was universally regarded as a party issue: he would "terminate it, as a safe means of changing the issue." He does not say just how he would terminate it, and it is hard to see how occupation would have made it less a party issue.

clare war against them. Explanations were to be asked also of England and Russia. To pursue such a policy, however, there must be agreement and leadership. The paper closed with these remarkable words:

"But whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

"For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

"Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or devolve it upon some member of the Cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree, and abide.

"It is not my especial province.

"But I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility."

The two points of importance, the taking up of a Union position in home affairs and the adoption of a jingo foreign policy, were suggestions of very different value. The first was the position which Seward had assumed for the past twelve months and that which Lincoln himself held, so that it is hard to see how the Secretary of State should have considered it to be singular, or why he should have thought it worth especial mention. It was indeed becoming more and more necessary every day, and shortly was unconsciously adopted by almost everybody under the pressure of events.[1] The second

[1] Thus the New York *Tribune* for two or three days after the firing on Fort Sumter headed its war news as "The Pro-Slavery War." Before the week was up, however, it had become "The War for the Union."

proposition, the idea of declaring war upon France and Spain, and apparently upon England, too, for the course advised in Canada would have this result, was such a plan as now seems so wholly impossible that we cannot easily think of Seward's reasons for seriously recommending it.[1] His idea was that the pressure of a foreign war would rally to the Union all the doubtful states and perhaps even some of the seceding states or parts of them.[2] If this were his thought, it can be explained only by the fact that he, like many others, had far too high an estimate of loyalty to the Union in the seceded and border states. The foreign nations that he now had chiefly in mind were Spain and France. Spain was at this time taking possession of St. Domingo, and France was considering the question of interference in Mexico. Granted the idea of a united South and North, it is doubtful if a defensive war against these two foreign countries would have been worse than a war between the states.

The wisdom or unwisdom of his particular advice is a minor matter compared with the proposal with

[1] It had been talked of before in 1854 in the Ostend Manifesto of which one object was to withdraw the public mind from Nebraska. It came forward again in 1858: see Ogden's *Life of E. L. Godkin*, Vol. I, p. 175. "Yet the three [Seward, Toombs, and Douglas] raved against England, and shrieked for war with an absurdity of which nobody but schoolboys should be guilty." It was talked of once more in 1865 in the conference of F. P. Blair, Sr., which led to the Hampton Conference. The idea was clearly not unheard of, though none the better for that.

[2] Gideon Welles afterward speaks of "the bugaboo of a foreign war, a bugbear which Seward well knows how to use." *Diary*, Aug. 12, 1862.

which the paper closes. With the wonderful career of Lincoln in our minds, we may be able to see no possible reason for imagining that Seward was any better fitted than the actual incumbent to fulfil the duties of the President's office. But at this time Lincoln was entirely unknown as an executive and not well known in any capacity whatsoever. Seward was a man of long experience in affairs of state. There is nothing in the Constitution of the United States that points to any such policy as Seward's proposal seems to contemplate, but the procedure in his mind was the government of England, in which the chief minister was the responsible head.[1] Perhaps Seward, who had seen several weak Presidents and strong Secretaries of State, thought it was really his duty to take up the reins of authority and direct affairs as he himself had begun to direct them under Taylor. The idea of the Secretary of State as the controlling officer of the administration had certainly been in his head.[2]

Whatever his views, they did not commend themselves to the President. Lincoln answered his memorandum the same day. He said that it seemed to him that the policy announced in the Inaugural, which Seward had approved, had been maintained:

[1] Seward, according to Welles' *Diary*, Sept. 15, 1862, liked to be called Premier, a title unknown to general usage in the United States. The present republic of France offers an example of Seward's idea put into practical form, for there the President, although the head of the state, is not responsible for the policy of the government.

[2] For instance, in 1843, in looking forward in some speculations about Webster, he writes: "Indeed, the secretary will be premier." *Life*, Vol. I, p. 669.

he could not see that Seward's plan was essentially different. As to foreign matters, he perceived no reason for not continuing the instructions to foreign ministers, which were at the time in course of preparation. As to the final proposition, he wrote: "If this must be done, I must do it."

That this was exactly the way to deal with such a case was shown by the results. So far as is known, neither Seward nor Lincoln ever mentioned the matter, which came to public knowledge only some time after both were dead.[1] The proposal was absolutely dropped and practically forgotten. Seward gained a confidence in Lincoln which he never lost, and through the four years of work and anxiety that lay before them, he used every power to carry out and maintain the policy of his chief, which, as a fact, was practically his own.

One of the results that Seward wished to accomplish by his "Thoughts" was far more effectually managed by the course of events. About the end of March, arrangements had been made for expeditions of relief to Forts Sumter and Pickens. But there was some confusion, arising from Lincoln's and Seward's doing things very much by themselves, often without consultation with the Navy Department and sometimes without consulting each other. The plans were not entirely carried out and much of the aid meant for Sumter went to Pickens. The latter fort was relieved and remained in the hands of the government throughout the war. But the expedition for the relief of Sumter did not get off

[1] It was first published in Hay and Nicolay's *Lincoln* in 1888.

to Charleston harbor till April 12th and by that time the fort was already under fire from the Confederate batteries. The expedition was unable to relieve the garrison, which surrendered on April 13th.

The news of the firing on Fort Sumter aroused the North to a passion of humiliation and anger and patriotism. Lincoln, it may be supposed, received it with resignation: he had probably foreseen its necessity. Necessary or not, the event had placed him in the position in which he desired to stand. The government had been attacked: it must now appeal to all that were still loyal to come to its support. Congress was summoned and a call for troops was sent to every state. The war had begun. There was now a definite policy. The issue had been changed from slavery to the support of the Union.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DANGER OF FOREIGN INTERVENTION

EVEN before the war was actually begun, it was clear that a very delicate situation would be created. At first Seward was so unwilling to acknowledge the possibility of a war between the states that it is doubtful if he had been able to form a foreign policy. During the winter his mind had been absorbed in efforts to deal with the domestic problem. When he did think of a possible war, he conceived it as a mere insurrection, a domestic or a "municipal" matter, one in which other nations had no concern. When it started to develop on so vast a scale, however, it was clearly, as a matter of fact, no mere insurrection but really a public war. Other nations were concerned in it because they could not help themselves. Their citizens in America, whether in the North or the South, were liable to unjust treatment. Their citizens at home were liable to find their business interfered with, as for instance and especially, those who had anything to do with the cotton trade. There were also sure to be questions arising from the use of some foreign country as a base of action or supply. These were all points in which the Confederacy would no doubt gain much and lose little. But there was, further,

a point in which the Confederates stood a chance of gaining even more and that was the possibility of foreign intervention. Any civil strife gives opportunity for intervention, formal or informal, and there are always likely to be motives. There were several special reasons in this case why foreign nations should be tempted to interfere.

Seward had had in mind thoughts of a foreign war even before the firing on Sumter: it had appeared to him that a foreign war would have the effect of binding together the conflicting elements of a country in the face of a common danger. This notion of his has been deemed by some an unexplainable aberration. When one thinks, however, of all the wars in history that have been provoked for the purpose of arousing the national spirit, the idea, though it appears no wiser or better, seems not so absolutely extraordinary. We do not know the reasons which brought Seward to this view, nor is it at all certain how definite a place it had in his mind or how much it influenced his action.[1] He

[1] F. W. Seward who had the best opportunity of knowing his father's views at this time, writes: "One of the curious delusions assiduously fostered by the Confederate agents abroad, and the press in their interest, was the notion which appeared to have gained lodgment in the British mind, that the Federal government was seeking a quarrel with England as a means of extricating itself from its troubles. Absurd as was the idea that the sorely pressed Union wanted any more enemies, it was, nevertheless, seriously believed" (*Life*, Vol. II, p. 628). This passage, however, appears to refer to the autumn of 1861, at which time Seward undoubtedly had no idea of the sort. The evidence that he had such an idea earlier is to be found in the "Thoughts" of April 1st, where though war with France and Spain is mentioned, war with England is implied; in his con-

was, of course, familiar with cases in history in which a foreign war had quelled domestic dissension. He may have thought of the position of the Federalist party as a result of the factious opposition ascribed to it in the War of 1812–1814.[1] In common with many other people, he overestimated the Union sentiment at the South; or rather, he underestimated the power of state pride.

But had Seward been correct in his estimate, it is hard to see how he could have conceived that it was right to provoke a foreign war, even though certain that the result would have been to bind the North and South together. He may have reasoned that if there must be war, it was better to have a foreign war and a united nation, than to have a nation divided by all the miseries of civil strife. He may have supposed that a war entered into for such slight causes as might at this time influence European powers could not have been protracted, though possibly severe.[2] Whatever the reasons for such a view, it seems clear that it had a considerable place in his mind, as he meditated a foreign policy.

In the more practical matters of the department,

versations with Doctor Russell, the correspondent of the *Times* (*My Diary*, Chap. VII); despatch to Adams of May 21st, with the comments and criticisms of Lincoln (Hay and Nicolay, Vol. IV, p. 270). The letters to his wife of May 17th and to Thurlow Weed on May 23d show clearly that he thought that a war with England might be a necessity.

[1] For his impressions on this subject early in life, see his Autobiography, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 27.

[2] Seward to his wife, May 17th, "It will be dreadful, but the end will be sure and swift."

he also found great difficulties. The foreign service was naturally disorganized by the necessity of appointing new representatives in foreign courts in place of those of the Democratic party. This was no easy task; the Republican party had heretofore been in opposition, while the last Whig administration had ended eight years before, so that men of diplomatic experience were rare. Seward himself knew no more of the forms of business required in carrying on foreign affairs, than had chanced to come to his notice during his service as senator, and yet he knew as much as any one else who was likely to be appointed to a foreign mission.[1] There were further difficulties arising from political considerations. Lincoln desired William L. Dayton as minister to England: Seward wished Charles Francis Adams to have the position. Lincoln desired that Frémont should go to Paris and Carl Schurz to Madrid. It was finally arranged that Adams should take the English post, and, as it turned out, his services were of the highest order and absolutely indispensable to the country. Dayton was sent to Paris, where, though not so much of a diplomatist as others who were there, he rendered effective assistance. Schurz went to Madrid, remaining at the post only a short time: he had been a great admirer of Seward but had now quite lost confidence in him.

The point of immediate interest in the foreign policy was to manage so that the Confederacy should obtain the least possible benefit from the

[1] Charles Francis Adams, *Address*, etc., at Albany, p. 51.

nations of Europe. All sorts of wild rumor and bravado had been flying about as to foreign assistance: the South was to have England or France or Mexico as an ally. If the question of alliance were absurd, there was always the possibility of intervention or mediation, and even though no mediation were offered, there were substantial advantages in recognition. The situation bristled with possibilities. Seward studied over the different forms of address called for in his despatches to different nations. Everywhere he based the representations he would have the American ministers make upon the necessity of the integrity of the Federal Union, pointing out that its preservation was essential to the peaceful interests of the world. In accordance with the policy of the administration,[1] he excluded slavery from consideration, taking the ground that it was a domestic matter which did not need to be discussed with foreign powers.

The nations of the greatest importance were England and France. They were most likely to be concerned and there was an understanding that they would take the lead in necessary action. France, at this time governed by Napoleon III, was not inclined to be especially friendly, unless it were to the advantage of the emperor; but there was no immediate reason why she should be openly hostile. More important still was England. England was the country to which the North looked at least for moral support, and also the country to which the

[1] As shown, for instance, in Lincoln's answer to his "Thoughts" of April 1st.

South looked for material support. The North had a general feeling that as they were fighting a battle for freedom against slavery, they could count upon her sympathy, and upon as strict a neutrality as was suggested by international law. Southerners had a very definite feeling that England needed cotton and could get it only from them, and that to get cotton she would press the international law of neutrality as far as it would go.

Beside a general acquaintance with political conditions and public opinion in England, Seward had some personal knowledge on the subject. He had for years been an intimate friend of Lord Napier, who had preceded Lord Lyons, the present British minister. But he had also visited the country only two years before and had met many persons of distinction. He knew Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister. He also knew Lord John Russell, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and had thought him speculative but sincere and a true believer in progress. He had become acquainted with many who had been earnestly interested in the anti slavery struggle,—Lord Lansdowne, the Duchess of Sutherland, Miss Martineau. He had been received with much attention as being the representative of the Republican party in the United States, "on which the hopes of freedom rest." He had received particular notice from the Queen and the Prince Consort and had been very favorably impressed by them. But he had also considered the industrial and commercial condition of the country, and had come to the conclusion that it was closely connected

with Southern slavery.[1] He must have understood that England could not sympathize very deeply with the North as defenders of slavery, when that issue was kept entirely in the background. He undoubtedly saw, too, that the cutting off of the cotton supply by the blockade would exercise a tremendous pressure upon government and people.[2]

Seward was more doubtful of the position of England than many persons.[3] Still he probably thought that her proceedings would await the arrival of Adams who would reach London about the middle of May. Here, however, he was in error, for the ministry desired to settle the status of the North and the South before Adams should arrive. On May 2d Lord John Russell had an interview with Yancey and Rost, two of the Southern commissioners: his lordship said little but listened attentively. On May 6th he announced in the House of Commons that a proclamation would shortly be issued in which the Southern Confederacy would be recognized as a belligerent. On May 11th the proclamation was issued and when Adams reached London, he read it in the newspapers.

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 385. Personal references will be found before and after.

[2] According to W. H. Russell, who presumably informed Seward, there were forty millions sterling invested in the cotton industry directly or indirectly, which meant a very large population dependent upon it.

[3] As for instance, Greeley, who scouted the idea of any sort of recognition as late as May 25th. "Nothing is more clear than that England will do nothing to give aid or comfort, or which has the appearance of giving aid and comfort, to a people fighting for slavery."

Seward and the government were naturally chagrined at this proceeding. It was not only a sudden, but a serious obstacle to their policy, both in itself and in its implications. A recognition of belligerency might easily be followed by a recognition of nationality; by the offer of mediation, or even by intervention. Further, this possibility lay not with England alone, but with England and France. These two powers had determined to act together in these matters. Indeed, on June 15th, Lord Lyons and M. Mercier, the ministers of England and of France, called upon Seward at the same time. Seward instinctively guessed the motive for so unusual a diplomatic proceeding.[1] He courteously regretted that he could not receive a joint representation and the two ministers separated, leaving their instructions in an informal manner. Seward, on reading them, replied that the government must decline to recognize any such joint arrangement, but must, according to its habit, communicate with each government separately. Whatever the formal mode of proceeding, the understanding now and for long afterward was that England and France acted together.

On receiving the news of the Queen's Proclamation, Seward wrote to Adams the views of the administration. He was from some accounts not the best person to negotiate with England, for he did not trust her and he was not trusted. Perhaps no one would have been much better, but it seems generally

[1] This is the expression of F. W. Seward (*Life*, Vol. II, p. 581), at this time with his father as Assistant Secretary of State.

allowed that the opinion of Seward prevailing in England at this time was that he was somewhat unscrupulous and much opposed to her interests. The bases for such a view were not very sound. There was a vague recollection of his dealings in the McLeod case twenty years before, possibly some remembrance of his pro-Irish sympathies during the Repeal agitation, with his more recent senatorial declamations in 1858, and rumor of a talk of his with the Duke of Newcastle about six months previously. There was probably as little of serious value in the latter case [1] as in the former, and yet as we have seen, though not unscrupulous as a public man, Seward did have strongly anti-English ideas. The despatch that he wrote to Adams on this occasion was much what England would have expected from a politician such as they thought him. The President, on seeing it, counseled changes which modified it in some degree, but even then, it was not a conciliatory document.

It was most important that Europe should understand clearly that the administration had the power to put down the insurrection which had arisen. For that end the necessary means was the power itself. Hence the battle of Bull Run was a terrible blow to Seward's policy. In the immense disappointment following that disaster, he fully shared, but he

[1] Seward denied such rumors in a signed statement, Feb. 8, 1862. Hollister MSS. "I uttered not one word of what I am represented in those statements to have said, and the spirit of the statements is exactly the reverse of all I said on the occasion referred to." See Pierce's *Sumner*, Vol. IV, p. 30, for English opinion on the matter.

summoned all his confidence and at once despatched instructions abroad with counsel how best to meet it. "The policy of the government is in no case likely to be changed, whatever may be the varying fortunes of the war at home," he wrote to Adams, "or the action of foreign nations."

It is probable that Bull Run had a useful effect upon Seward's ideas at this time. He must have seen that if the proclamation of neutrality had not been issued when it was, it would surely have been issued later. He may have felt that war, whether at home or with a foreign power, was a more terrible thing than he had imagined, and not to be lightly undertaken. Whatever the cause, his foreign policy changed. He no longer thought a foreign war to be a possible solution: for the future the avoidance of such a war became the foundation of his system. In this way he finally got on the right line, and was eventually able to make his foreign policy one of the most successful things of the Lincoln administration.

But he did not succeed in some of his first efforts. When the war was imminent and the possibility of Southern privateering was foreseen, Seward thought that it would be of advantage to the United States to join in the Declaration of Paris, by which, after the Crimean War, the powers of Europe had stated certain questions of international law and had abolished privateering. The United States had not acceded to this declaration in 1856, although she herself had proposed two of the prin-

ciples stated, because it did not go as far as seemed right. Now Seward proposed to the powers to join in the declaration. He learned, however, that England, while offering no objection to this action on the part of the United States, would not engage to consider her assent to have any bearing upon relations in the present war. The President then closed the negotiation. The slight chagrin which Seward may have felt at this refusal (it had few practical consequences, as there was almost no privateering in the war), was perhaps somewhat relieved by the case of Bunch which shortly occurred, and supplied him and Lord Russell abundant material for correspondence for some time to come.

Mr. Bunch was the British consul at Charleston. The British government, though not wishing to see the United States a party to the Declaration of Paris, for some reason desired to propose participation to the Confederacy. Having no representative at the Confederate capital, indeed not having recognized the Confederacy as a power, they forwarded their communication on the subject to the British minister at Washington who, in turn, sent it to Mr. Bunch at Charleston, to be conveyed by him to the Confederate government. The matter came to the knowledge of Seward, through the capture in New York of Mr. Bunch's despatches to England. The case was fortunately within the power of the United States. Consuls are commercial officers and have no diplomatic privileges. Mr. Bunch had been discovered corresponding with the enemy

of the country to which he was accredited. Entirely aside from the particular business that he was about, this activity was offensive and the President revoked his exequatur. As this is the privilege of any government to which a consul is accredited, for any reason that seems good, England did nothing except to correspond freely and finally to take Mr. Bunch away.

As the summer passed and the fall came, the public opinion of England and France was obviously unfavorable, and was clearly fomented by agents of the Confederacy abroad. It occurred, therefore, to Seward that it would be useful to send to England and to France unofficially some men of position to do whatever they could to counteract this hostile feeling. Several gentlemen were asked, and finally Archbishop Hughes and Bishop McIlvaine accepted the invitation: it was felt that they could be influential in France and England respectively. At the suggestion of Archbishop Hughes, there was added Thurlow Weed. About the time these gentlemen crossed the Atlantic, two other delegates were planning the same journey, on the part of the Confederacy. Mason and Slidell, commissioned as ministers, one to England and the other to France, succeeded in reaching Havana on a blockade-runner and there took passage on the English mail-steamer *Trent*. Their actions were not very secret, however, and a knowledge of them came to Captain Wilkes of the *San Jacinto*. Wilkes waited for the *Trent*, stopped her by a shell across the bows,

and sent a lieutenant with a force of marines to take the Confederate envoys. This was done and Mason and Slidell were shortly lodged in Fort Warren, Boston harbor. The *Trent* continued her voyage.

The exploit aroused universal joy in the heart of the North. Nobody considered whether the act in itself was fine or whether the results were worth while. A brusque and by no means impartial observer remarked that he could see no advantage to be gained by it. "It surely could not be supposed that the addition of one or more to the number of persons [Confederate agents] who had been already some time in London on the same errand would be likely to produce any change in the policy adopted." [1] Such considerations were in the background. Not only the personality of the envoys, senators who had plotted disunion, but other matters,—the Southern effort at recognition, the possibility of foreign interference, the use of the territory of foreign nations as a base of operations,—these things had so irritated the North that a chance to do something, even though it were something slight, was delightful. Wilkes became a popular hero. The Navy Department commended him; the House of Representatives thanked him. Seward, however, was the person whose opinion was likely to prevail, for the matter was sure to be taken up

[1] So Lord Palmerston said to Adams, before the event. Adams, *Life of Adams*, p. 224. See also *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. III, p. 467, where Palmerston reports the interview of Nov. 13th to the Queen.

and the first representations would be made to the Secretary of State. Doubtless he was elated, but he kept a strict silence. The British Legation and the Department of State were the only places in Washington where one could hear nothing said of the *Trent*. The "young diplomatists" at the former spot were "as demure and innocent as if nothing had happened: at the latter" a judicious reserve was maintained.[1] In spite of this reserve, however, Seward cast an anchor to windward: he wrote to Adams that the act had been without authorization. The government waited to learn the English view of the case.

The English government did not wait any longer to express their view than they had waited in the matter of recognition. They had considered the case before the event took place. It had been supposed that Captain Marchand of the *Adger*, which lay at Southampton, would try to stop the *Trent* as she neared England and the ministry had sought the opinion of their legal advisers. The law officers of the Crown pointed out "that according to the principles of international law, laid down in our courts by Lord Stowell, practiced and enforced by us, a belligerent has a right to stop and search any neutral not being a ship of war, and being found on the high seas, and being suspected of carrying enemies' despatches, and that consequently this American cruiser might by our own principles of international law stop the West India packet, search her, and if the Southern men and their

[1] Russell, *My Diary*, p. 213.

despatches and credentials were found on board, either take them out or seize the packet and take her back to New York for trial." [1]

This view was no secret. News of the stopping of the *Trent* reached Liverpool November 27th at about noon: at three o'clock a public meeting was held in which a resolution was offered, calling on the government to assert the dignity of the British flag by requiring prompt reparation of this outrage. Little was said or reported in favor of the resolution, but Mr. John Campbell spoke against it, referring at length "to the opinions of the law officers of the Crown, as being in some measure inclined to show that such a step as that taken was justifiable under the existing state of international law." Mr. Torr also spoke against it, saying that he had seen a letter "in which the law officers of the Crown had in anticipation expressed a decided opinion in favor of the legality of a proceeding similar to that which had just taken place." Mr. J. Turner tried to continue this argument, but he was not allowed to go on, and the resolution was passed. Many of the older

[1] Lord Palmerston to Mr. Delane, Nov. 11, 1861. Dasent, *Life of John T. Delane*, Vol. II, p. 36. This letter gives a wholly different view of the English position from that which has commonly obtained. Whether the view were maintained by the law officers or not, the extract shows beyond a doubt that there was some ground and precedent for Captain Wilkes' action. The passage came to my notice as quoted in an article in the *Contemporary Review* for Oct., 1909, "Peace or War," by Lord Courtney of Penwith, who appears to think that the ministry recognized the precedent, but decided not to follow it. He suggests reasons for their not accepting the opinion of the law officers, which are somewhat different from those in the text.

merchants on 'Change thought the meeting premature.[1]

The next day, November 28th, the *Times* said in its very temperate editorial on the subject, "Unwelcome as the truth may be, it is still nevertheless a truth, that we have ourselves established a system of international law which now tells against us." Mr. Delane, as we have seen, was aware that the action of Captain Wilkes was justifiable by precedent. He proceeded, however: "It is, and it always has been, vain to appeal to old folios and bygone authorities in justification of acts which every Englishman and every Frenchman cannot but feel to be injurious and insulting."

This latter sentence expressed the view of the ministry. The country was excited; "the outrage savored so much of contemptuous defiance, that the national feeling was wounded to the quick;"[2] the ministry did not feel bound by the opinion given a Cabinet committee a fortnight before, but determined to demand the return of Mason and Slidell. Palmerston, who had for years practiced "a policy of bluff,"[3] was precisely the man to carry the matter through with a high hand. The ministry precluded discussion by sending an ultimatum, and ordering 8,000 troops to Canada.

Palmerston enclosed the draft of the despatch to the Queen in a letter, adding that it was stated that

[1] See the London *Times*, Nov. 28th, for an account of the meeting.
[2] Martin, *Prince Consort*, Vol. V, p. 347.
[3] Dasent, *Life of John T. Delane*, Vol. II, p. 21.

General Scott in Paris had said to some Americans that "the seizure of these envoys was discussed in the Cabinet at Washington, he being present, and was deliberately determined and ordained; that the Washington government fully foresaw that it might lead to war with England"[1] and more rumor of the sort. Why Palmerston added this talk of the boulevards to the draft of a most important state paper is not known. On December 5th, the *Times* published a denial by General Scott of the story, and added that he refuted only what no one had ever believed. Lord Palmerston, presumably, thought that there was something in the report: otherwise we might suppose that, in his opinion, the rumor would help bring the Queen to acquiesce in the brusque despatch which he submitted to her. He did not vouch for this hearsay, but commented upon it as though it were worthy of some consideration. In spite of this vision of the belligerent Cabinet led by the truculent Seward, the Queen and the Prince Consort, even then in his last illness, felt that the despatches were harsh and the Prince Consort himself modified them. The Queen returned them to Palmerston with a note, expressing her desire that the necessary demand should be made in the most delicate way.[2] The message still had somewhat the form of an ultimatum: it did not argue the point, but hoped that the seizure of the

[1] *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. III, pp. 468, 469.

[2] It nowhere appears that Palmerston informed the Queen that her legal advisers had pronounced the act of Wilkes to be in conformity with English precedent, but doubtless he did so.

envoys had been unauthorized and that they would be restored. An apology was also desirable. A second despatch ordered Lord Lyons, if the British terms were not answered in seven days, to leave Washington. A private letter informed him that the release was more important than the apology, and that he might say nothing about withdrawing in seven days.[1] These demands reached Washington the 19th of December.

There had by this time been a month for consideration. Charles Sumner, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, had at once determined that Mason and Slidell would have to be released. Blair, the Postmaster-General, was of the same opinion. Even Lincoln, who much desired to retain the envoys, thought that they were likely to prove "white elephants." Still popular feeling was strong; the North was unanimous against surrender; the "nation would never forgive the man who should give them up."

It was not known how Seward would act. He seemed to Dr. Russell, who met him several times, to be in a good humor and in the best of spirits. This was remarkable, for he must have known then of the English demands, which would certainly put the United States and himself more than any one else in a painful predicament. He maintained a complete silence, however, and so did Lincoln. On December 20th Lord Lyons called upon Seward and informed him of their substance, but did not offer a formal statement of them; Seward took time

[1] Walpole's *Russell*, Vol. II, p. 358.

to consider and by December 25th was ready with a draft for discussion at the Cabinet meeting.

Seward's draft offered certain reasons for showing that Wilkes had been correct in each step which he took, except the final one of removing Mason and Slidell from the *Trent*. In that point the secretary differed from the first view of the English law officers, but acknowledged their later position to be technically proper and therefore acceded to the demand that the prisoners be released. Of the Cabinet Bates, the Attorney-General, agreed to the legal doctrine, in which, as he said, all Europe was against us. He further thought that the idea of war with England was impossible. Chase agreed that the technical right might be with England, but that a great nation should not insist upon it. There was, in fact, a general feeling that Seward's position was necessary. The President did not entirely agree, and as it was decided to postpone the matter till the next day, he considered the possibility of another answer. He was unable to find any better ground for action and Seward's draft was adopted with the assent of all. The prisoners were released and the incident was closed.

When the matter was thought over, the result was seen to be distinctly favorable. It was not merely that in a dangerous predicament Seward had had courage to do the necessary thing in spite of public opinion. It was not merely that in his attitude he showed clearly that he had abandoned his earlier and dangerous ground of courting or considering a foreign war. The really important thing in Seward's

despatch was a matter not yet mentioned. After agreeing with the doctrine that a neutral ship engaged in lawful commerce was protection to anything not contraband of war, Seward went on to show that such had been the traditional position of the United States for many years; that it was clearly indicated by diplomatic instructions just before the War of 1812; and that in restoring the prisoners and recognizing the neutral rights claimed by Great Britain, the government was assenting to a view which America had always believed to be to the best interests of nations. By this presentation Seward did two things, each of importance. He put England on the ground of insisting on the rights of neutrals, a matter to which in the past America had sometimes thought her indifferent. And he had put America right in her own idea of herself. He had brought her in accord not only with Europe but with her own past. The result of the settlement was distinctly good. At home, where the original popular delight had quieted down, it showed the course of right and honor in such a way that national feeling was satisfied; abroad, it greatly improved the position of the United States. The universal view of Europe[1] had been that the act was illegal, but it was widely feared that public opinion would be too strong to allow the American government to proceed in a discreet or correct manner.[2] It was also declared that the Continental powers saw with pleasure that Great Britain was protesting against

[1] Except, it would seem, of the English Crown lawyers.
[2] Pike to Seward, Jan. 9th, *Dip. Corr.*, 1862, p. 596.

a principle which she herself had always declared and practiced and to which they themselves had only reluctantly yielded.[1]

The excitement over the *Trent* quieted down and in a short time the battle of Pittsburg Landing gave a favorable turn to public opinion. But as the summer of 1862 wore on with no further decided military successes, the leaders of the English ministry began to make up their minds that the time was come when the fruitless struggle should end. One of the first to reach this decision was Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. By the end of July Lord Palmerston came to his opinion and felt that England should join with Russia and France for an offer of mediation. By the middle of September Lord Russell agreed with Palmerston that joint mediation ought to be attempted, and further believed that if this were impossible, England herself should acknowledge the Southern states as an independent power.[2] At about this time Mr. Gladstone was given a reception and banquet at Newcastle in honor of his successful management of the Budget. As he was ready to go to that place, he received a note from Lord Palmerston, saying that he and Lord Russell thought the time fast approaching when an offer of mediation should be made by England, France, and Russia. Following these hints and his own thoughts on the subject, Gladstone in his speech at Newcastle referred to the

[1] Sanford to Seward, Jan. 9th, 14th, *Dip. Corr.*, 1862, p. 596. Adams to Seward, Dec. 27th, *Dip. Corr.*, 1862, p. 12.
[2] Morley's *Gladstone*, Vol. II, pp. 75–77.

American situation. In his oratorical way he said: "We may have our own opinions about slavery; our opinions may be for or against the South; but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and the other leaders have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy;[1] and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation."

The remark caused an immense sensation. It was immediately taken as indicating the policy of the ministry. Such, however, was not the case. Lord Russell, in a note to Gladstone of October 20th,[2] wrote that he thought Gladstone, in such a statement, had gone beyond the latitude which all speakers must be allowed. "Recognition would seem to follow," he added, "and for that step I think the Cabinet is not prepared." He was right: there was opposition in that body to such a course. Lord Russell had ascertained that Lord Granville would not favor recognition,[3] and there was reason to suppose that his views were those of the Queen. Other members of the Cabinet, especially Sir George C. Lewis, Minister of War, were understood to be in the same position.

These private matters were unknown to the American minister and secretary. Adams wrote to

[1] Gladstone was good authority, for of course the ministry knew that the Confederacy was building a navy in England.

[2] Walpole's *Russell*, Vol. II, p. 80.

[3] Lord Granville wrote Oct. 1, 1862, to Lord Stanley of Alderley: "John Russell has sent me a message announcing a cabinet, to consider whether we should offer to mediate . . . It appears to me a great mistake." Fitzmaurice, *Life of Earl Granville*, Vol. II, p. 441. Lord Granville's letter to Lord Russell is given on p. 442.

Seward that the tone of Gladstone's speech might be construed as indicating the course to be taken by Great Britain, and considered the expediency of asking a conference with Lord Russell to inquire whether the speech were to be regarded as conveying to the public the views of the government.[1] On the basis of this letter, Seward wrote to Thurlow Weed: "I think it will be wise for you to return to London to watch things there. Can you go?" Weed hurried to Washington and after seeing him and Lincoln, returned to Albany ready to sail at once. Before he could take ship, however, Seward received another despatch[2] from Adams in which that sagacious diplomatist gave an account of an interview with Lord Russell. After mentioning other matters, Adams skilfully made allusion to "a certain speech." Lord Lyons was about to return to Washington: Adams hoped he would go with the prospect of remaining some time. For himself, he was obliged to confess, he had been lately called to the consideration, "in certain possible contingencies," of his own traveling equipage. At this Lord Russell seemed rather embarrassed (not unnaturally as we can see with a more accurate knowledge of affairs than Adams could have had) and in the ensuing conversation said that Mr. Gladstone's speech was a personal matter, with which the government was not concerned, but that it had evidently been much misunderstood. He further intimated that Lord Palmerston and

[1] Adams to Seward, *Dip. Corr.*, Oct. 10, 17, 1863.
[2] No. 248. Adams to Seward, Oct. 24, 1862.

other members of the ministry regretted it, and that Mr. Gladstone was inclined to correct it. From this rather guarded language, and doubtless other advice to the same effect, Seward was rightly led to believe that any idea of recognition had for the moment fallen through. He wrote to Weed on November 9th to give up the thought of going abroad. "The reasons you can imagine. All is well and cheerful here to-day." To Adams he wrote on the 10th in official language: "It is a source of satisfaction to know that the expectations that Great Britain would speedily give her aid to sustain the failing insurrection here, which disloyal citizens at home and abroad had built upon the extra-official speeches of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, were unreal and purely imaginary." In his letters to other ministers, he maintained his confidence, though military operations were not encouraging and the fall elections appeared to show defection in popular support. Seward needed all his optimism and all his determined resolution to carry through the policy that he had begun.

The immediate danger was perhaps not yet over. Lord Russell had informed Adams that no change was contemplated in the policy of England and no Cabinet action was taken. The United States stood in the rather advantageous position of one who has called a bluff. Palmerston, Russell, Gladstone, were all for recognition, but they would not make a public declaration of their views. Doubtless they knew that they would not be sustained by their

colleagues,[1] and presumably that they would not be sustained by the country. However it might be, it put them rather on the defensive which, in the turn of events the next month, was fortunate.

When asking Weed to go to England, Seward had told him that beside affairs in London, things in Paris were in such a position that Dayton and Sanford had a thousand fears. In September Mr. Dayton had had an interview with M. Thouvenel, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he had inquired concerning the activity of Mr. Slidell. M. Thouvenel said that he had had but two interviews with that gentleman, both some time since. It seemed probable, however, that although Mr. Slidell had had no recent intercourse with the official representative of the ministry, he was in communication with some one of more importance; namely, the Emperor. Mr. Slidell was a man of great acuteness and it was supposed that the result of his interviews was that the Emperor proposed to Russia and to England a joint mediation. On November 6th Mr. Dayton inquired of M. Drouyn de l'Huys, who had succeeded M. Thouvenel, whether such action was contemplated. The minister replied guardedly that a desire that the war should come to an end had been spoken of and was still spoken of, but that no action was in prospect. Dayton, who appears to have had a directness

[1] Sir George C. Lewis, Minister of War, had already spoken in public in answer to Gladstone. The Duke of Argyll, the Duke of Newcastle, Sir George Grey, Mr. Milner Gibson, and Mr. C. P. Villiers, were the other so-called Americans in the Cabinet.

which is now very refreshing, inquired further what would be done if such an offer were made and declined. The French minister replied that nothing would be done; the two countries would be friends as before. Dayton then informed him "unofficially" that such an offer would come to nothing. He was right but the matter did not get so far. The proposal was made to Russia and England. Russia declined to act with the others. When the matter came up in the English Cabinet, it was opposed by several, and even Palmerston and Russell were backward in urging acceptance.[1]

This was the real end of danger of intervention. It is true that the *Moniteur* spoke of the English action as an adjournment rather than a refusal, but the Proclamation of Emancipation, the increased supplies of cotton from India, Napoleon's embarrassments in Mexico, joined to the victories of Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the firm and active position of the Secretary of State and the American ministers aboard, made the recognition of the Confederacy more and more improbable. Seward might have breathed freely had it not been that other possibilities of difficulty had come up and had already taken alarming form.

[1] Morley's *Gladstone*, Vol. II, p. 85.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BLOCKADE AND THE CRUISERS

THE affair of the *Trent* was an incident: one of those matters that come up and must be dealt with and may be finally disposed of. There were many more such incidents, though of less importance, arising from one or another circumstance, in which the general policy and the particular skill of the State Department were severely tested. The relation of neutral and belligerent is always delicate, even under favorable circumstances, and easily gives rise to occasions in which the indiscretion or intrigue of subordinates may involve governments. There were, however, in addition to the many incidents growing out of the position of neutrals in general, two things which called for continual attention from the State Department as well as from other departments of the government. These were the blockade of the Southern ports and the Confederate cruisers.

One of the first acts of the Confederacy was to offer to issue letters of marque and one of the first acts of war of the North was to declare a blockade of the Southern ports. The two acts were interdependent. The South had no navy, nor any means of building one: she could therefore plan no opposition to the United States navy which, though scattered at the beginning of the war, was yet of con-

siderable size. But the United States had a great commerce and carrying-trade, almost all of it in the hands of the North, and on this it was naturally thought that Southern privateers could inflict great injury. As the South had no carrying-trade, the government could retaliate only by a blockade of the Southern ports, which would have the effect of opening to capture any foreign carrying-trade that might seek to make up the deficiency of the South. Both these proceedings would tend to implicate foreign powers, for their harbors would naturally be sought by Southern privateers, and their commerce and industry would be affected by the blockade.

The blockade is said to have been suggested to the administration by Seward. He had early advised that naval vessels in foreign waters should be recalled for this purpose, whenever such a step should be found advisable.[1] Another plan was merely to close the ports of the states in insurrection, but this being a matter of proclamation, Seward urged, was impractical and would raise constant trouble. So the blockade came in answer to the call for privateers.

A blockade is a difficult matter: to be respected it must be effective. But the United States, at the beginning of the war, had very few ships at immediate control, much less enough successfully to close the ports along three thousand miles of coast.[2] The

[1] *Life*, Vol. II, p. 547.

[2] On March 4, 1861, there were only three steam-vessels "in Northern ports at the immediate disposal of the new administration." Soley, *The Blockade and the Cruisers*, p. 14.

measure, therefore, did not become operative at once and was thus often a source of great annoyance to foreign powers, because it did not really prevent trade as it pretended to. When it did become effective, after about six months, it was the source of much greater annoyance. The ineffective nature of the blockade at first was a slight matter compared to its later efficiency.

The chief direction in which it concerned foreign powers was in the matter of cotton. Here the North suffered somewhat, but England and France suffered more. The French cotton-spinning industry was not so large as the English, but still it was of considerable importance. At the beginning of the war, it was confidently believed at the South that this staple would prove master of the situation. England and France must have cotton: no government could stand the pressure that would be put upon it to get a supply.

For some time, however, nothing of this sort seemed likely, partly because there was a fair stock of cotton abroad, and partly because the blockade was at first not very effectual. In the beginning of 1862, Adams was able to inform Seward that the supply in England was still sufficient for a good while and that the expectations of those who hoped that the blockade might be raised had declined.[1] There was, on the other hand, allegation that the blockade was not effective, and he thought steps might be taken in Parliament based on such a view. Seward replied that, in his opinion, the opposite

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, Jan. 17, 1862, p. 16.

was the case, as was shown by the fact that at Charleston gold was as scarce as cotton was at Liverpool. But he suggested that Adams should ask Lord Russell whether it would not be wiser and better for England to remove the necessity of a blockade by withdrawing her recognition of the Confederacy as belligerents. Then, said he, the strife would end to-morrow.[1] In a few days he added the suggestion that the blockade-running, which was becoming a regular business in England, was practically "a combination of British capitalists under legal authority to levy war against the United States."[2]

The British ministry began to find themselves in a difficult situation. It became apparent to them that Great Britain was taking a position of enlarging the privileges of neutral powers which was contrary to her previous practice. She had hurried to assume neutral rights in her proclamation of belligerency; she had been eager to assert them in the case of the *Trent;* she would now be increasing them should she disregard the blockade. There was an uneasiness, Adams wrote, in Parliament, both on the part of the opposition and the government. Seward began to feel more definitely the ground on which he stood, and the fear that Great Britain would disregard the blockade passed from his mind. He continued, therefore, to urge that she should withdraw the recognition of belligerency.

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, March 6, 1862, p. 43.
[2] *Ibid.*, March 11, 1862, p. 46.

The actual facts concerning cotton at this time, however, were such as to make it possible that no reasons of policy could withstand the pressure of commercial interests. Though Adams had stated in January that there was enough cotton for six months, the showing in March made it very clear that at the end of that time there would not be any more. For the six months ending March, 1861, Great Britain had imported 1,500,000 bales: in the six months ending March, 1862, there had been imported only 11,200 bales. The price had, therefore, risen: in March, 1861, it had been seven pence a pound; a year later it was thirteen pence. As the stringency continued, the price continued to go up until, in September, it reached almost half a crown. Long before this time the closing of mills had begun to result in very great suffering, especially in the north of England, where thousands were out of work, and more and more were added every day to the mass of unemployed. The war cost America inordinately, but it cost England a good deal too. Many of those who paid most, relatively speaking, were factory hands who could least afford it; and strange as it may seem, the North had no warmer friends in England than among those who were the greatest sufferers. They at least understood what the war was about. But it was not only the cotton-spinners that suffered: there were larger commercial interests. All this loss, Seward neglected no occasion to point out, arose mainly because England had thought fit to lend her virtual aid to the insurgents, by her immediate proclamation of

neutrality. Adams, however, gave no ground for hope that England would withdraw that recognition, nor was he able to gain any assurance that the ministry would try to stop the blockade-running. In fact, as the pressure increased during the spring and summer, he was led to believe that the ministry would think more and more of some means of breaking up the blockade, even by such steps as actual recognition.[1] Seward felt that he could hold on a little longer: some of the Southern ports had been captured and opened, especially New Orleans, from which cotton might be expected; he was told by his foreign correspondents that considerable supplies of the East Indian staple were on the way, and that the new crop would soon follow; he had great hopes that McClellan's campaign in Virginia would bring about the capture of Richmond, and end the war; he had some belief, probably, that Napoleon's interests in Mexico, and the English element that sympathized with the North, would be sufficient to prevent England and France from any real effort at intervention. Whatever his reasons, he determined to yield nothing, and as the summer wore on, he found himself justified. We have seen how the liability of foreign intervention disappeared in the fall. Blockade-running still continued and indeed became almost an art, as well as the source of much mutual complaint between England and the United States. But any danger

[1] He was right in this opinion. In the course of the summer, as has been seen, Palmerston and Russell decided that the time for recognition, or even intervention, had come.

arising from foreign action on the blockade passed away with the year 1862.

The other matter that has been mentioned, however, took its place as a source of great anxiety, and here too England, by the force of circumstances, found herself in a delicate position. The President of the Confederacy in his proclamation of April 7, 1861, announced that he was prepared to issue letters of marque. Privateering had been a common mode of naval warfare, and the United States had practiced it with great effect in earlier days. The European powers had abolished it by the Treaty of 1856, but the United States had not acceded to that agreement. When Seward proposed to do so at the beginning of the war, the English ministry insisted that such accession could not be regarded as affecting present conditions, and nothing further was done. The United States thus had no especial ground of complaint at the Southern programme, although it was obvious that it would bear hard on the North, which had almost all the commerce of the country, rather than on the South which, certainly after the blockade was established, had none at all. Privateering, therefore, sprang up and for a short time was carried on with some success. But privateering needs home ports for fitting and refitting and for the condemnation of prizes, and the Confederate merchants, as the blockade became effective, had none. Could they have bought ships in foreign countries and sold prizes in foreign ports, privateering would have been an important element in the war. But this was entirely opposed

to the laws of neutrality, and the practice, therefore, died out in the first year of the struggle. It gave place, however, to a much more formidable effort, which indeed began as soon as did privateering, although it matured in a slower way; namely, the destruction of commerce by the regularly commissioned vessels of the Confederate navy.

Of these several sailed from Confederate ports. The *Sumter* escaped from New Orleans, and as long as her boilers lasted, succeeded in keeping out of the way of the Northern cruisers pursuing her. On her voyage she captured a number of prizes, of which some were sent back to New Orleans and recaptured; others were sent to Cuban ports where they were released, while two were burned. The *Sumter* finally put in at Gibraltar for repairs: as these were not allowed by the English authorities, however, she was sold. Her cruise was not unsuccessful, but it was clear that unless some additional means could be found for building cruisers and supplying and repairing them, the regular navy of the Confederate states would accomplish no more than her privateers.

England was the great maritime power and the South naturally turned to her for ships. The law of England, in the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819 1815, forbade the "fitting out, equipping and arming" of any vessel for the purpose of cruising or committing hostilities against a friendly state. These expressions, however, gave a considerable leeway for interpretation. Captain Bulloch, who had charge of the naval interests of the Confederacy

abroad, was advised that ships might enter the service from England without coming within the statute. His advisers were of the opinion that vessels might be not only fitted out there, but also equipped and armed, if the two things were kept entirely separate.

In February, 1862, Adams received evidence from the United States consul at Liverpool that a ship was being made ready for the Confederate states. On the 18th of the month he informed Lord Russell of the fitting out of the *Oreto*, "an armed steamer evidently intended for hostile operations on the ocean."[1] Lord Russell caused inquiries to be made and sent back word to Adams that the *Oreto* was being built for the use of Messrs. Thomas Brothers of Palermo, and that he had every reason to believe that she was to enter the service of the Italian government. About a month later Mr. Dudley, United States consul at Liverpool, wrote to Adams that the ship was still in the river; that he had been informed by some of the crew of the *Annie Childs*, blockade runner, that they had brought over with them four Confederate officers for it. On the 25th Adams communicated these advices to Lord Russell, who again took steps to get the facts in the case. On the 8th of April the Foreign Minister informed Adams that the *Oreto* had had an English crew and an assorted cargo, but no passengers, troops or guns; that the Southern gentlemen mentioned had had no connection with her, but were still in Liverpool.

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, Feb. 18, 1861.

The *Oreto* had by this time been gone from Liverpool for two weeks. Instead of proceeding to Palermo and passing into the Italian service, she went to Nassau, where she was delivered to Captain Maffitt of the Confederate navy. She then began to take on guns and ammunition which had been sent to her by the *Bahama* from Hartlepool. This, however, looked too much like "fitting out and equipping": the ship was now inspected by the British authorities and was libeled in the Admiralty court. It appeared to the court that she was preparing for the merchant service, so she was released and left Nassau for Green Cay, a small island apparently not under British authority, where she took on an armament and proceeded as a Confederate cruiser under the name *Florida*.

When Adams referred to these matters in an interview with Lord Russell, that minister stated that it was Great Britain's desire to be neutral; that where there were profits to be made, people would always take risks; that the government would go as far as the law allowed. Adams said that the answer that nothing could be done was very unsatisfactory, because it might be fairly presumed that every nation which possessed the desire naturally carried within itself the power to prevent abuses of its authority. His lordship did not see how the government could change its position.[1] When this despatch reached Seward, he was unable to suggest any reasons which should force a different attitude, but optimistically hoped that a change in military af-

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, April 16, 1862, p. 73.

fairs and the successes of the North would put a new face on things, and even bring about a withdrawal of the recognition of the Southern states as belligerents. The capture of New Orleans and of Yorktown early in the season led him to look forward to a successful summer. Victories in the field were the means by which Seward counted on overcoming foreign opposition: he was confident that the United States could quell the insurrection, and he kept this belief through the darkest hours of the war, constantly sending to all the foreign ministers the strongest assurances of continued strength and ability, even in the face of defeat. Just now, however, his powers were strained to the utmost to explain the strategy of McClellan's operations in the Peninsula.

On June 23d Adams wrote to Lord Russell, referring to the *Oreto*, which, he said, had gone directly to Nassau, where she was completing her armament, and calling his attention to a "still more powerful war-steamer" nearly ready for departure on the same errand. Lord Russell again sought his sources of information and in a week learned that the customs officers had gone to the shipyards of Messrs. Laird and inquired the destination of the vessel. The Messrs. Laird "did not seem disposed" to reply to any such questions, and the customs officers felt that they did not have any other means of ascertainment. His lordship therefore suggested that Mr. Adams should find out something himself.[1] This he did and on July 22d

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, Adams to Seward, July 4, 1862.

and 24th submitted a number of depositions which showed clearly enough the character of "Gunboat 290," as she was then called. Lord Russell put the papers before the law officers of the Crown, and on the 29th received word from them that the "290" ought to be stopped. Orders to that effect were sent to Liverpool, but the "290" had sailed the same day. She was bound for the Azores, where she was armed and equipped and took on a crew. Thence she proceeded to cruise under the name *Alabama*.

Lord Russell held now and afterward that the position of the British government had been wholly in line with strict neutrality. As a fact, however, this position rather falls to the ground between two stools. It may have been entirely legal for the *Alabama* to go to sea, but the government tried to stop her and failed only by an accident. The papers were sent to the Queen's Advocate for an opinion. But it happened that at just that time he had broken down from overwork, so that they lay upon his table unnoticed for three days. When they were taken up and action was resolved upon, it was too late.[1] But this was really only an explanation of especial circumstances: the true reason that the *Alabama* got to sea was because there was no interest in England strong enough to prevent her. If the government had desired, it could have stopped her long before the time it tried to do so.

All this kept Seward busy. He was now en-

[1] It may be, of course, that no matter when the order came to stop, the *Alabama* would have sailed a little before, but there is no evidence to that effect.

deavoring to prevent the foreign war, thought of a year before as something that would arouse the spirit of nationality.[1] In September he wrote in his circular letter to the different ministers: "We hear, officially and unofficially, of great naval preparations which are on foot in British and other foreign ports, under cover of neutrality, to give the insurgents a naval force. Among these reports is one that a naval armament is fitting out in England to lay New York under contribution."[2]

This last rumor refers to two vessels that had just been begun at Laird's: these were iron-clads, rams of the most formidable description. As they came nearer and nearer completion, it grew apparent that the United States had no vessels that could cope with them. When inquiry was made, it appeared that they were being built for M. Bravay, a French merchant, who, it was said, was acting for the Khedive of Egypt. The "rams" became a source of great alarm and rumor surged this way and that. At first England would not interest herself in the matter, but as news of the depredations of the *Alabama* began to come in; as the losses to American shipping began to reach the millions; and as the United States began to make it clear that it meant to present claims upon Great Britain for all losses caused by her failure to detain the ship, the government was brought to think that something

[1] He wrote to his daughter, telling her the political situation in very simple terms, and ended, "This begets disputes and most of my time is occupied in settling them, with a view to avoiding foreign war." Aug., 1862. *Life*, Vol. III, p. 124.

[2] *Life*, Vol. III, p. 129.

might be done. Unfortunately it was difficult to suggest just what to do. In March, 1863, a ship called the *Alexandra*, which was suspected of being another *Alabama*, was detained, that the case might be tried in the courts. The Chief Baron of the Exchequer charged a jury that the offense of actually equipping for hostile purposes could not be committed, unless the equipping was so far completed in British territory that the vessel was capable of hostile operations, and that, consequently, the attempt to equip must be with the intent that she should be so completed within British territory; —all of which meant simply that unless the vessel were practically got ready for war in British territory, she did not come under the provisions of the law. This had always been Bulloch's understanding of the subject and he had been very careful to avoid infringement. The *Alexandra* was released; so would the *Alabama* have been released if she had been detained; so would the rams be released also.

When the news of the *Alexandra* decision came to Seward, he thought it time to bring forward his last resources. He wrote Adams a long despatch. If the decision was affirmed in the court of last appeal, he said, it would appear to the United States that there was no law in Great Britain which would effectually prevent violations of neutrality, and the fitting out of the *Florida*, the *Alabama*, the *Alexandra* would thus receive the sanction of the government. This, as he pointed out, would amount to an informal or a partial war between the countries. If it should become general, the President felt that the responsi-

bility would not be with the United States. He closed by referring to the recent increases of the navy and to the successes gained by the army at Vicksburg and Gettysburg.[1]

Seward had by this time become convinced that the English ministry desired to prevent a repetition of the *Alabama* incident and that, if sufficiently pressed, would prevent the coming out of the two steel rams. He seems to have been sure that if the British government felt it necessary to stop the ships, they would find out a way. He told Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, that he need make no preparation against them: the latter relied on his information but grumbled to his diary, saying that Seward "knows these vessels are to be detained, yet will not come out and state the fact, but is not unwilling to have apprehension excited. It will glorify him if it is said they are detained through protest from our minister." In the view of all the facts, it hardly seems that this could have been Seward's opinion. He was doubtless sure, perhaps too sure, that the ministers would interpose, if sufficient pressure were put upon them, but that otherwise they would not interfere. It could hardly have been good policy to have announced beforehand that the ministry would do what he hoped to induce them to do.[2] He had supplied Adams with what in his

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, Seward to Adams, July 11, 1862, pp. 308–310.

[2] Seward's opponents appreciated him even if his friends did not. Benjamin, the Confederate Secretary of State, writing to Slidell, June 22, 1863, regrets very much that Seward has so correctly read the temper of the British ministry, and deplores the "success of his policy of intimidation, which the world at

opinion was sufficient means to bring them to action. Throughout the summer, he kept up an almost threatening tone in his despatches, and Adams was well aware that, if necessary, he might go to the last extreme. As the summer went on, it was clear that matters were approaching a crisis. On September 5th he sent a last despatch to Lord Russell. In it he presented the situation that had been described in Seward's letter to him of July 11th, and summed it up in the apt phrase: "It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is war." Further discussion on his part he feared would be useless. Lord Russell apparently agreed with him. He undoubtedly desired neutrality, but he felt, perhaps, that he should not take the risk of war, on what was, after all, narrow and doubtful ground, and Adams saw in the papers of September 8th the statement that the government had decided to detain the vessels in order to try the merits of the case in court. The case did not come into court, for the ministry had no hope of a verdict: they therefore purchased the two ships for £225,000.

With the detention of the rams, one more great danger passed away. There were other ships that caused some anxiety. The *Alexandra* had been allowed to go to sea in the summer of 1863, but was detained at Nassau. The *Rappahannock* was sold by the British government to parties acting

large supposed would be met with resentment, but which he, with deeper insight into the policy of the Cabinet, foresaw would be followed by submissive acquiescence in his demands." Bancroft, *Seward*, Vol. II, p. 505.

for the Confederates, but when this action came to its knowledge, it undertook to stop her. She got to sea in a hurry with the workmen still on board and made for Calais, where she at once engaged the attention of Dayton and was finally detained. The *Georgia* managed to get to sea under care of an English firm, the members of which were afterward tried under the Foreign Enlistment Act and fined £ 50 apiece. The ship was shortly captured by the *Niagara*. The *Sea King* got away in 1864, became the *Shenandoah* and was in the Pacific at the close of the war. The French government was more successful in stopping the efforts constantly making in its ports: the only cruiser to get to sea from France was the *Stonewall* just before the end of hostilities.[1]

None of these ships except the *Shenandoah* did any considerable damage to Northern commerce; but all, together with the *Florida* and the *Alabama*, were the cause of incessant watchfulness and anxiety on the part of the government. They make a constant figure in the despatches, not merely as to their fitting out, but from the further fact that they continually sailed in and out of foreign ports. Here the recognition of belligerency was the source of great inconvenience and injustice. Without a doubt the Confederacy had a right to be considered a belligerent on land: it had armies in the field which had to be dealt with as soldiers and not as insurgents. But it was not a *de facto* belligerent

[1] This material is conveniently summarized in Soley, *The Blockade and the Cruisers*, pp. 213–221.

erent at sea, and there seems little justice in holding that a country which had not a single open seaport, no merchant-marine, and no navy except what could be got in neutral nations, should have at sea all the rights of war that could be granted. Seward always called the Confederate cruisers *pirates:* the term was certainly incorrect; nor would he have advised the logical consequences of such a view; namely, the hanging of all taken with arms in their hands. He was more nearly right when he urged that so-called neutrals who aided and abetted this so-called navy were really levying war against the United States, and that view he seems to have been fortunate enough to recommend to the British ministry with effectual results.

CHAPTER XVIII

MATTERS AT HOME

In the first year of the war, while the actual business of the armies was carried on with much practical vigor, there was some debate and discussion that might appear academic or theoretical, as to just what was its object. Seward in his "Thoughts" of April 1st, wrote, "My system is built upon this *idea* as a ruling one; namely, that we must change the question, before the public, from one upon Slavery, or about Slavery, for a question upon Union or Disunion." This was before the firing upon Sumter. It was very natural that the public mind should then be chiefly absorbed in the questions of slavery. The country was threatened with war arising from the secession of several states; the secession of those states had come about on the accession to power of the Republican party; and that party had been dangerous to the seceding states only as it concerned itself with slavery. It had been formed to withstand the advance of slavery in the territories, but it was currently held at the South to be an Abolitionist party, and Lincoln and Seward had each of them said much to cause such an idea to gain currency.

Still, events hurried the nation along the way

Seward had indicated. The firing on Fort Sumter crystallized the vague feelings of the North, which rose at once to the defense of the Union. Whatever differences existed on the subject of slavery were swept aside in that unanimous answer to the attack on the flag. Seward's view, though perhaps it called for no particular change of policy, had a solid foundation in fact and in feeling: he wished to unite the North, and the border states as well,—indeed, the whole people, and he was convinced that the only way was to plant in them the feeling that the Union was in danger. The preservation of the Union was, in fact, the only ground upon which the government could stand if it proposed to coerce the seceded states. It was only because in the Northern view secession was insurrection, that Lincoln could take a step in the direction of applying force.

Still in many minds the war was a war against slavery. Public opinion is not generally dominated by the principles of law, nor by a feeling for a consistent policy. Whatever the legal aspect of the case, the people of the North felt that the Union really stood for freedom and liberty and democracy and progress. The Union soldiers marched to the strains of "John Brown's Body" and "The Battle Cry of Freedom." The South was held to be the defender of slavery.

But the war for the Union was not a war for freedom from the Northern standpoint only. The South was also contending for freedom;—for freedom to manage its domestic and political affairs as it saw

fit, and to the Southern mind the Union, in trying to prevent their doing so, was quite as much of a tyrant as George III had been. Hence it was sung of Maryland, that "the Despot's heel" was "on her shore"; hence the Southern papers wrote that the war was "the most unnecessary and wicked war which ambition or lust has ever inaugurated";[1] hence the President of the Confederacy wrote in his message to Congress, "We feel that our cause is just and holy."

This matter proved of importance in the foreign relations of the United States, and Seward found it a difficulty in presenting the position of the government to foreign powers. The North at first felt that it ought to be able to depend upon the sympathy and moral support of England, as being the defender of freedom against slavery. Seward and many other Americans had friends there on whose interest they could count. But it seemed a fact that the war was a war for the Union: the President's proclamation had not mentioned slavery. If this were the position, it would hardly have been thought that there was anything but the usual feeling of international friendship to arouse British sympathy for a war in defense of the Union. Why should England side with the North rather than with the South, save on the question of slavery? Seward, in writing despatches to Adams, letters suggesting ideas that he hoped would influence English opinion, often argued it was for England's best interests that the United States should remain

[1] Richmond *Enquirer*, April 26th, in Rhodes, Vol. III, p. 401.

one power; but such a view was not very common in the country itself. Nor could the North have expected strong national feeling on the basis of being a friendly power threatened with insurrection: in the case of the insurrection of Hungary against Austria, America's sympathies had not been with the friendly power, and if Ireland should have risen against England, the sympathies of the North would pretty clearly have been with the insurrection.

It is true that Seward's position seemed to be necessary both in law and in fact. It was the position of the President and the government, of the army and the people; it was of necessity the foundation of foreign policy. A very sound judge[1] in speaking of this matter says that the error which England made in these days lay in the application of ordinary political maxims to what was not a political contest but a social revolution. "The significance of the American war," he writes, "lay in its relation to slavery." Few in England, however, saw this clearly, or if so, they did not argue from it that England should support the North. Lord John Russell, speaking in Parliament, was quoted to Seward by the minister to The Hague to the effect that it was better that the North and the South should separate. The basis of such a view was clearly the idea that the restoration of the Union on the old basis, half-slave and half-free, would merely lead to a repetition of the present evils. Seward himself was on record as saying that the conflict could not be repressed. If the Union and the Con-

[1] Lord Morley in his *Gladstone*, Vol. II, p. 69.

stitution provided no means of doing away with slavery, then even anti-slavery men in England might well feel that the Union had better not be preserved.

Hence many of the English leaders had no especial sympathy with the North, and hence Lord John Russell could look at the question as merely a question of neutrality. Here were two conflicting forces: England's interests and her sympathies led her to wish the struggle at an end. But that should not induce her to vary from the line of strict neutrality. True, the South bought arms in England, but the North did also: English law prescribed the necessities in the case of such transactions, and if these necessities were observed, the government had nothing further to say. Lord Russell never abandoned this view, and we have seen that when he allowed himself to be forced into action which went beyond it, it was only as a lesser evil. England has been much blamed for the attitude of her government in this matter. But in so far as the English ministry erred by trying to deal with a case of social revolution by ordinary political maxims, they merely did what the American President and Secretary of State did. Lord Russell, as he looked into the chaos of contemporary events, did not see the clear lines of action that would have enabled him to foretell the future. Nor did Seward, though he had what the English minister had not;—the firm conviction that the cause of human liberty was somehow bound up in the cause of the American Union and would somehow stand or fall with it.

For a long time no member of the Cabinet, nor the President himself, had in mind the idea of emancipation of the slaves as a necessity, or even as a desirable measure. In 1861 Frémont rushed into publicity with an emancipation proclamation in Missouri which had been disavowed. In the fall of that year a somewhat similar proclamation by General Hunter in North Carolina had also been disavowed. Popular feeling is well shown by a note in the diary of the Secretary of the Navy, July 13, 1862, to the effect that up to that time Lincoln had been "prompt and emphatic in denouncing any interference by the general government with the subject. This," he adds, "was, I think, the sentiment of every member of the Cabinet."

Early in the war, however, the feeling arose that the North did not stand on firm ground unless she made it clear that she fought not for the Union alone, but for the emancipation of the slaves, the abolition of slavery in America. Carl Schurz, who had been an earnest admirer and supporter of Seward in days before the war, was now minister to Spain. He convinced himself that the great danger of foreign intervention came largely because Europe conceived the war to be in fact, as it was in law, a war simply for the restoration of the Union. Could the powers understand clearly that the Union meant freedom, then the sentiment of the people of Europe (which he surely should have understood) would be so heartily with the United States that no government would venture to oppose it. He wrote to Seward expressing these ideas, and urging upon

the administration the policy that followed from them.

Seward thought very differently and had already framed his policy and founded it on other ideas. He wrote to Schurz that no doubt slavery would be an issue which would appeal more strongly to the world than that of nationality. "But," he went on, "it is never to be forgotten that although sympathy with other nations is eminently desirable, yet foreign sympathy, or even favor, never did and never can create or maintain any state, while in every state that has the capacity to live, the love of national life is and always must be the most energetic principle which can be worked to preserve it from suicidal indulgence of fear or faction as well as from destruction by foreign nations."[1] In his conduct of the diplomatic correspondence Seward always excluded the subject of slavery from the considerations he sent to the representatives of the country abroad.

The precise time of the change of his opinions cannot now be stated. The general tenor of anti-slavery legislation during the winter of 1861–1862 is well known, and also the general trend of the thought of the President. It was not till July 13th that Lincoln suggested to Seward and Welles emancipation in the states still in rebellion as a necessary measure; he mentioned it to them in an informal way only. On July 22d he proposed the plan at a meeting of the Cabinet, which was taken by surprise. Several members agreed with the President, including Seward. The latter, however, advised

[1] Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, Vol. II, p. 303.

postponement: he felt that the indirect effects would be bad; in the face of the present miserable situation, it would seem like the last effort of a drowning man. His mind was probably more on the effect of emancipation upon foreign opinion than upon its practical military advantage. Lincoln said that the idea was sound and that he had not thought of it: he would postpone any action and wait for a victory.[1]

This action of the President renders it likely that Seward had not been a party to his meditations on this matter. If Lincoln had talked it over carefully with Seward, he would probably not have brought the idea to the notice of the Cabinet at this time. If Seward's idea was sound, Lincoln would doubtless have appreciated it, if offered in private. The secretary himself, however, had come to feel that the slavery issue must be made more prominent. Adams had written to him that emancipation was the topic to which public opinion was most sensitive.[2] In January, 1862, Seward had written to Adams to express surprise that public opinion in France and England should assume that the government was favorable to a continuation of slavery. It had come into power on the very issue of opposition to the extension of slavery. When it finally prevails and the Union is restored, slavery will be confined to a certain and definite sphere.[3]

[1] Seward's view was correct. The London *Times* of October 7, 1862, pointed out that the Emancipation Proclamation showed that there was no hope of saving the Union.

[2] *Dip. Corr.*, 1862, p. 23.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1862, p. 37.

About the end of May the secretary had written letters to the ministers to England and France, calling their attention to the subject, "so far interdicted" in their correspondence.[1] He recommended to the consideration of foreign powers the relation of slavery to the cotton supply. He did not take moral ground any more than did Lincoln. But as Lincoln proposed emancipation as a war measure, so Seward now suggested to the cotton-wanting powers the drawbacks of slavery. As things stood, he argued, slaves gained their freedom by leaving insurgent masters and coming to the Union armies in great numbers. If the struggle were to be protracted indefinitely (by foreign sympathy and indirect support), it was but a question of time before there would be a servile war, which would have a disastrous effect upon the production of the much-desired cotton. Nor would intervention be a remedy, he added on July 18th, for it would result in renewed devotion to the Union "even with the sacrifice of slavery." After the President's proposal, Seward reviewed the question more broadly,[2] and considered the situation in the United States and Brazil, the two slaveholding powers of America. Here he spoke more confidently of the anti-slavery feeling in Europe and the inconsistency of upholding the slave power by continued recognition of belligerency and continued hope of intervention. He ended by pointing out that intervention would assuredly

[1] Seward to Adams, May 28th, and *cf.* a later despatch of July 18th; Seward to Dayton, June 3d, *Dip. Corr.*, 1862.
[2] Seward to Adams, July 28, 1862. *Dip. Corr.*, 1862, p. 157.

bring about "a war of the world; and whatever else may revive, the cotton trade, built upon slave labor in this country, will be irredeemably wrecked in the abrupt cessation of human bondage within the territories of the United States."

This introduction of the slavery question into his foreign despatches was made, neither on the high moral ground of Carl Schurz, nor on the ground of military or political effect on which Lincoln based his action. Like Lincoln, Seward believed slavery to be a great wrong, but he did not believe that the world was governed by moral considerations directly:[1] he thought that moral power ruled it indirectly, and in his position of Secretary of State, he saw himself practically forced to present the iniquity of slavery in its economic form. Before the war he had usually depicted it to his countrymen, not as a moral evil to be got rid of, but as an economic factor prejudicial to the life of the country.[2] Now he presented slavery to the nations of Europe and more particularly to England, in its economic bearings; that is, as related to the production of cotton. The idealists said that Seward believed that the world was really ruled by cotton.[3] It is not probable that this in any way truly expresses his views: he was

[1] Though "the *forces*, in the long run, go with the virtues. The Christian precepts, although they may be denied and refused for a time, ultimately are accepted by all men, equally in politics, and elsewhere." Doubtless these words, written after the war to his daughter (*Life*, Vol. III, p. 332), show his real thought in the matter.

[2] This was a very early conviction, coming perhaps from times when there were slaves in his father's house.

[3] Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences*, Vol. II, p. 282.

like Lincoln in believing that the Divine Ruler of the world managed it not by direct interposition, but by the action of various people,—often very faulty and worldly ones. Lincoln about this time made a wise remark to a deputation from the religious bodies of Chicago. "These are not the days of miracles," said he, "and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears wise and right."[1] He thought it wise and right to use emancipation as a means to his great end, the preservation of the Union, and he viewed it largely in its practical effects. Seward in like manner looked upon slavery as one of the factors in a very complicated case, and he tried to consider the case in all its bearings, that he might succeed in presenting to each government that view which would most influence it.

Seward was not Lincoln's private adviser in the matter of emancipation. Doubtless the two had often spoken of the possibility, but Seward was unprepared for Lincoln's suggestion on July 13th,[2] and Lincoln seemed unprepared for Seward's advice on July 22d. The secretary acquiesced in the measure, but did not approve of it, at just that time. "It is mournful," he wrote,[3] "to see that a great nation shrinks from a war it has

[1] Hay and Nicolay, *Lincoln*, Vol. VI, p. 155.
[2] See Seward to Adams, July 3d, *Dip. Corr.*, 1862.
[3] *Life*, Vol. III, p. 118; the reference is not to Lincoln, but to the popular calls for emancipation.

accepted and insists on adopting proclamations when it is asked for force." His mind was absorbed in other aspects of the situation. On July 12th he wrote to his wife: "Defeat at Richmond or here would probably bring on recognition of the Southern states, to be either acquiesced in or met by war. In such a case, what practical thing could I do but examine the strength of our armies, and ascertain the strength and probable strategy of the rebels? While doing this to push every available and effective person into the country to recruit men; or failing that, to provide for a draft of the militia."

His main duty was to avert foreign recognition, mediation, or intervention, and his way of doing this was by constantly showing that the government was powerful and victorious. If, then, victories did not come, it was for him to do whatever possible to create them. Hence at this time he had just been on an important mission to the North, which had resulted in a new call for 300,000 men, with assurances from the governors of the loyal states that the demands would be honored. Even this action he applied not directly to the army in the field, but only to the case as he dealt with it himself. He wrote to Adams that the governors of the loyal states unanimously demanded a speedy close of the war; that the President had called for 300,000 men; and that they would be furnished with alacrity.

As time went on without the stimulus of a decided victory, Seward scanned the foreign horizon

with anxiety. France and England persisted in their recognition of the Confederacy as a belligerent power; they continued to complain of the blockade as being so rigorous that they could get no cotton and so lax that their merchant-marine was put to much damage by it; the *Alabama* began to capture and burn American ships. Adams wrote that he had informed Lord Russell there was reason to believe that like enterprises were in active preparation, but that his lordship had regretted it was impossible to go beyond the terms of the law providing for such matters.

On September 22d the first announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation was made. It had no important effect on foreign affairs at once: in fact, its effect was rather that which Seward had predicted. At any rate, in the fall came the propositions for recognition already mentioned. Their rejection perhaps was due in some degree to the emancipation measure.

While these things were taking place, the time for election had come and passed. "I see and hear of political campaigns going on in the North," says Seward, "and mourn over so many evidences that faction cannot be kept down, even by the presence of armed enemies besieging the capital and inviting intervention." The elections, as is generally the case in the middle of an administration, were reactionary.

In early winter came an exhibition of politics, not to say faction, that affected Seward nearly. He knew that there was strong political and even public

feeling against him, partly the result of general ill success, partly the result of his "conservatism" and his support of McClellan, partly due to other causes. A caucus of the Republican senators was held which passed a resolution requesting the President to ask for Seward's resignation, action which was changed to a resolution in favor of a reconstruction of the Cabinet. It was thought that Chase should be more prominent. As soon as Seward heard of the resolution, which was before the President, he sent in his resignation. When he had the facts, Lincoln understood the matter and dealt with it with that open shrewdness that so often served him well. He listened to a committee of the caucus and heard their view of Seward. He presented the idea to the Cabinet and got their opinion that such legislative interference with the executive was out of the question. Then, without saying just what he was doing, he brought Cabinet and committee together and asked for a free discussion. The committee did most of the talking and accused Seward of inaction and conservatism, of lack of energy and even of principle. The members of the Cabinet said little, but Chase, who had often expressed these views, felt himself in a false position. The meeting broke up without action, but the next morning the Secretary of the Treasury came to the President and presented his resignation. Lincoln received it eagerly, and almost at once declined Chase's resignation and Seward's as well.

This incident was significant of one thing; namely, that Seward was now really "out of

politics." He had been greatly disappointed when Lincoln had been made leader of the party which he himself had led so long. He had at first felt that he was still to be the practical head. But when this idea passed out of his mind, as it shortly did, he devoted himself to his proper part in the government. He supported the President, not only in his own specific department of foreign affairs, but also with advice and counsel of all sorts. In this latter direction, it is true, he was widely held to have gone altogether too far. We have seen the action of those opposed to him. To use the President's quaint figure, "While they seemed to believe in my honesty, they also appeared to think that when I had in me any good purpose or intention, Seward contrived to suck it out of me unperceived." There were many who thought that Seward's influence was harmful; that he held things back, though he really longed for success, and needed it to carry out his work as much as any one. But there were also some among Seward's friends who were not at all satisfied with affairs. A good example of these is Welles, the Secretary of the Navy.[1] Welles, together with other members of the Cabinet, was sorely tried by the Secretary of State. He said that Seward wanted to manage Lincoln himself; that he minimized the Cabinet meetings and their importance; that he wished to be "the Premier, the real executive"; that he was too passive in yielding to England; that he had

[1] A good example because he expressed himself very freely. I believe that he should be numbered among Seward's friends.

no fixed principles or policy; that he was all wrong in fearing a foreign war; that he was meddlesome and wanted to put his finger into other people's business; even that he was a cunning contriver and a time-serving politician.[1] The view he gives of Seward is a fairly consistent one (though not very correct) with one exception; namely, that he says that the secretary had tact.[2] If Seward had been the tactful man Welles thought him, he would have used his talent in doing what he had to do without wounding the sensibilities of his colleagues. In this he did not succeed, and the reason is clear. Seward was unselfishly bent, as far as a man of his life and training could be, on carrying out a great task. If he interfered with others, as he often did, it was not because he was a meddlesome busybody, but because he felt so sure of himself and his own view, that he did not imagine his advice could be rightly found fault with.

His especial duty, as he saw it, led him to do everything he could, in and outside his own department, to forward the work of putting down the rebellion. And in doing this he often disregarded the feelings of others. Instead of having great tact, as Welles thought, he would seem, in these later years, to have had very little of that diplomacy which enables men to manage easily the larger relations of life. But even so, Welles could write, "Seward's foibles are not serious fail-

[1] Mr. Welles' views on Seward are apparent throughout his *Diary:* they are most definitely expressed in the entries of Sept. 15, 1862, April 22, 1863, and Jan. 2, 1864.

[2] *Diary*, Jan. 2, 1864.

ings,"[1] and advise strongly against his resignation.

However all that was, one man believed in him, and that man was Lincoln. He believed in Seward and confided much in him. And Seward was in this respect reliable. Lincoln had deprived him of the great opportunity of his life, but it nowhere appears that Seward, after he had once come to know the President, ever had the idea of supplanting him. He was a resolute supporter of Lincoln even when, as in the matter of emancipation, the President was not acting under his advice.

[1] *Diary*, Dec. 20, 1862.

CHAPTER XIX

THE END OF THE WAR

THE Newcastle speech of Mr. Gladstone put an end to any danger of intervention on the part of France and England. It is true that there yet remained such a possibility. Mr. Slidell was still in Paris, and his interviews with Napoleon III, his intrigues against Lord Russell, his management of Mr. Roebuck, brought matters several times into a position in which it seemed that it might come. But there was no real danger except in the occurrence of something quite unforeseen. Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell appear to have made up their minds that England would, under existing circumstances, be no party to intervention, and when these gentlemen decided upon a line of policy, it took much to move them. Adams and Seward had found this out when the policy was opposed to them. They now confided in the finality of the decision, when it was in their favor. By this time, however, the question of the cruisers was becoming acute. By the winter of 1863 the destruction caused by the *Alabama* had reached enormous proportions, and there were now being made ready for the Confederates the two steel-beaked rams which were building at Laird's. It was clear that if the South could get these ships, she could get anything.

Hence Seward and Adams turned their attention chiefly to this phase of the foreign peril: the *Alabama* claims were suggested, the *Alexandra* was brought into court, the last weapon of diplomacy was furnished Adams, if everything else should fail. When it appeared that the government would pay a million dollars to sustain the ministerial idea of neutrality, then Seward and Adams felt rightly that though their watchfulness could not be diminished, yet they were no longer contending in a hopeless cause. The second great danger had been averted. It is true that there were still exasperating things to be suffered, but the corner had evidently been turned, and so far as the ministry were concerned it was clear that they would maintain a strict neutrality if it were according to their own idea.[1]

When these matters ceased to be so immediately pressing, another, which had for some time caused anxiety, came forward. At the beginning of the war the republic of Mexico had been in such a state of civil disturbance and political strife that private business could be carried on only with the greatest difficulty. Commercial troubles arose, which, joined to the political disorders, led finally to action on the part of the three European powers concerned. Eng-

[1] Lord Russell always contended that England had kept strict neutrality even in the *Alabama* case. He did not deny that strict neutrality had enured to the disadvantage of the North, but that was, to his mind, the fortune of war. He considered it unfortunate, doubtless, that England's neutrality should have cost one of the combatants fifteen millions, but the American war had cost neutral England quite as much as that and more, and had cost it in the daily sufferings of people who could ill afford to pay.

land desired to protect her merchants; Spain also had commercial interests that needed assistance, and further had interests arising from her large West Indian possessions; France, beside the commercial consideration, had plans for conquest. These three powers, therefore, decided to interfere in Mexican affairs for the purpose of clearing up their commercial difficulties. They invited the United States to join. Seward, foreseeing the course of events, had used his best power, through Mr. Corwin, the very effective Minister to Mexico, to arrange the differences. Failing in that effort, the United States, on December 4, 1861, declined to be a party to the intervention. Seward, in writing to Dayton, said that while the United States could not object to the powers in question seeking redress from Mexico, yet the government was opposed to the policy of making alliances with European nations, and preferred not to press her claim against Mexico at a time when that country was distracted by civil strife. The three powers therefore proceeded alone. England provided three ships and a few marines; Spain, twenty-six ships and six thousand men; and France a still larger contingent amounting to fifteen thousand men. It became clear that the expedition was not merely a commercial intervention, and in April, 1862, England and Spain withdrew from it.

The leading spirit in the matter had always been the Emperor of the French. He was a man of vague and indefinite ambitions, and was prone to distract attention from affairs at home by seeking glory abroad. He had sought glory in Russia and after-

ward sought it in Germany. Now his mind was turned to Mexico. It would doubtless be a convenience to his schemes if the United States should be divided into a Northern and a Southern power. If for no other reason, it would be convenient to a future French power in Mexico to have as a neighbor a Southern Confederacy which owed as much to French assistance as the United States had owed to that source eighty years before. He, therefore, carried on continuous negotiations with Mr. Slidell and, as has been seen, in the fall of 1862, suggested to England and Russia that they should join France in an offer of mediation. The proposal, however, had come to nothing. Though this plan could not immediately be pushed, and though England and Spain had withdrawn from the Mexican intervention, the Emperor pursued his course. The French army in Mexico was increased to make good the inroads of disease and on June 16, 1863, succeeded in entering the capital city. A government was at once organized through which the Mexican people shortly proffered an imperial crown to the Archduke Maximilian, a brother of the Emperor of Austria. The offer was not immediately accepted for it was too evidently not, as it pretended to be, on the part of the Mexican people, but merely a set of foreign intriguers. Maximilian put off acceptance until there could be gained a more definite knowledge of the will of the Mexicans. While this definite knowledge was becoming more crystallized and manifest, General Forey extended as far as he could the rather narrow field of French occupation.

This matter, of course, received the closest attention of Seward. If, by their lax enforcement of the duties of a neutral, the English had seemed to infringe upon the traditions of international law in general, the French, through their Emperor, were unquestionably infringing upon one of the well-understood traditions of American policy; namely, the Monroe Doctrine. Seward could not feel, however, that the country stood in any position for enforcing this Doctrine, and for the moment he allowed the artifice of a commercial intervention still to obtain in the national intercourse with France. Time went on and Maximilian was offered and declined the throne. Still the French minister assured Dayton that France had no intention of permanently appropriating any part of Mexico and that she would leave the country as soon as she could get redress, and could go with honor. Dayton, who had a pointed way of putting things, very refreshing among the long-winded utterances of diplomacy, suggested that France might leave a puppet behind her. The minister said no: the strings were too long to work.

In the course of the winter, however, it appeared to those who were managing affairs that Maximilian might well claim the crown offered to him and early in February, 1864, Dayton informed Seward that the Archduke was about to visit Paris to confer with Napoleon. The position was one of difficulty. Actually the French Emperor was engaged in a perfectly understood plan to create an empire in America, with a prince of the house of Hapsburg

on the throne. In ordinary circumstances the United States would never have thought of acquiescing in any such proceeding. Even now, with an immense Civil War absorbing the energy of the country, the House of Representatives expressed the national view with great vigor. A joint resolution was introduced into the House, declaring "that the occupation of Mexico or any part thereof by the Emperor of the French or by the person indicated by him as Emperor of Mexico is an offense to the people of the republic of the United States." Charles Sumner, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, saw that this was not the way to manage international difficulties, and when the resolution came to the Senate, he arranged that no action should be taken upon it. When the news of the resolution reached France, however, it caused great feeling. Dayton was greeted by the French minister with the question, "Do you bring us peace or war?" Dayton replied that no such question should be asked: that the resolutions merely expressed what France had long known,—the dissatisfaction of the people of the United States with her attitude.

Seward still allowed it to be officially assumed that the French army was in Mexico to press certain commercial claims and that Maximilian had been invited to become Emperor by a certain element in the Mexican republic. He instructed Dayton that if the Austrian prince appeared in Paris with any assumption of political authority or title in Mexico, he must refrain from intercourse with him. But

this was not put on the ground of the Monroe Doctrine. It was blandly remarked that the United States acknowledged revolutions only by the direction of the President, upon full and mature consideration, and that until recognition, the United States did not hold formal or informal communications with political agents or representatives of revolutionary movements in countries with which they still held diplomatic intercourse.[1] The interview with the Emperor was satisfactory and Maximilian accepted the crown of Mexico. Official proceedings took place at the Archduke's palace at Miramar on April 10, 1864, and shortly afterward he sailed from Trieste for his dominions. The European papers were full of enthusiastic articles on the glorious future of Mexico, which "by the re-establishment of the monarchy, returns to her traditional path, and again finds the true condition of order and prosperity without sacrificing anything of her independence." When Seward received information of these matters from Dayton, he replied that while it was possible that embarrassments might arise, he still remained firm as heretofore in the opinion that the destinies of the American continent are not to be *permanently* controlled by any political arrangements made in the capitals of Europe.[2]

Not only was the establishment of a monarchy in Mexico a matter of most serious interest to the United States and contrary to her whole line of past

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, Feb. 27, 1864, Vol. III, p. 45.
[2] Seward to Dayton. *Dip. Corr.*, April 30, 1864, Vol. III, p. 80. The italics are mine.

policy, but the present situation gave rise, as Seward admitted, to all sorts of embarrassing possibilities. There were, of course, rumors of many kinds: alliance of Mexico with the South, cession of Texas, recognition of the Southern Confederacy by France. Of all this Seward, however he must have felt, took no official notice. Three years before he had suggested that there might be a war with France; now he used every effort to avoid it. The United States was in a good position with reference to that country. Seward was assured that there was no further thought of mediation or intervention; that the rams building at Bordeaux had been sold to Sweden; that the *Rappahannock*, which had escaped from England to Calais, would remain there. However much he desired to act, he probably felt that he had better hold on to the positive good a little longer.

There were also other matters of great domestic importance at the moment; namely, the summer military campaign and the presidential canvass. On March 9th Grant had received from Lincoln his commission as lieutenant-general of the army of the United States. He had considered the situation, settled the main points of attack as Richmond and Atlanta, and delegated Sherman to go to the latter place by way of the army of Johnston, while he himself opposed Lee before Richmond. Prospects were bright: Seward in his optimistic circulars hoped for a speedy close of the war.

As to the other matter, it seems to-day strange that even at this time there should have been

two opinions about a renomination of Lincoln. But there were those who were dissatisfied with the President, and those who coveted his chair. Seward had always been definite in declining to be a candidate: even when Lincoln himself had suggested that he ought to succeed him, he said no. But Chase felt differently. He had for some time allowed it to be understood that he believed the times called for a man quite different from Lincoln, and that if needed by the country, he was not unwilling to be that man. There were other radicals who would have nominated other leaders. Meanwhile, Grant's campaigns were most costly and brought about no obvious results. The Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor were well-known names by the time the convention assembled. When it did meet, however, it was unanimous and patriotic. It called itself the National Union Convention and all of its votes, save those of Missouri, were given to Lincoln.

As the summer wore on, however, and military successes did not come, popular confidence was shaken and there were many who feared that Lincoln would be defeated. On August 12th so accurate an observer of political conditions as Thurlow Weed told the President that he could not be re-elected. The failures before Petersburg, Early's Raid, the danger to Washington were not balanced in the popular mind by the destruction of the *Alabama* off Cherbourg by the *Kearsarge*. The Democratic convention, meeting at Chicago at the end of the month, declared that the war was a

failure, and that efforts should be made to restore peace on the basis of the Federal Union. The convention nominated General McClellan, who accepted, but declined to approve the principles of the platform. The fortunes of war, however, changed and only a fortnight later Sherman and Farragut put affairs in a brighter light. As the depression of the summer passed away, the country returned to its confidence in Lincoln, who was reëlected by the votes of all the states then in the Union except three. Seward went home to vote and in Auburn, according to his old custom, he spoke the night before the election to his friends and neighbors, explaining and encouraging, as firm here in his confidence of a successful issue as he was in writing to the American ministers in foreign countries. They were accustomed to say of him that he discounted victories; never did one occur that he had not already made full use of it.

In the winter following Lincoln's reëlection, it began to be apparent to all that the Confederacy was in dire straits. It was naturally in the minds of many that in some way the North and South might come together and settle their difficulties without the loss of life which must result from another campaign. One of these persons was Francis P. Blair, Jr., who conceived an idea that he thought would bring Jefferson Davis and the South once more to desire to make common cause with the North. He obtained a pass from Lincoln who understood that he had some proposal to offer to Jefferson Davis, but did not wish to hear what

it was. When he reached Richmond, Mr. Blair unfolded his idea. The war, he said, was practically over; at least so far as slavery was concerned, and if continued further, it could be only as a war for independence on the part of the South. Were there not other matters which would draw the two sections together more strongly than such a feeling would keep them apart? He thought of one: Napoleon was making an effort to establish a monarchy in Mexico. Could not North and South suspend hostilities while the Southern soldiers lent their assistance to the Mexican republic, aided perhaps by Northern forces who had so far been their foes? Might not Davis see here a chance to rescue his country from danger, and perhaps himself be the means of building up a greater America, embracing the whole glorious country between the Atlantic and the Pacific?

It is curious to find here at the end of the war an idea which had passed through Seward's mind at the beginning,—the joining of the two conflicting powers in defense of America for the Americans. We do not know how much of a place the plan ever had in Seward's mind: doubtless he had thought of it only as a desperate last resort. As a last resort, too, it may have been that Jefferson Davis allowed himself to consider it. Whatever he really thought of the scheme, he saw in it a possible opening of negotiations and he therefore appointed three commissioners. The President deputed Seward to meet them, but subsequently joined the party himself in what was called the Hampton Roads Conference.

Lincoln and Seward met the Confederate commissioners on the *River Queen* on February 3, 1865. The conference was informal and no record was kept of it. Lincoln had stated the bases of any conversation to be: no armistice but a real end to the war; the restoration of national authority; the position on the slavery question already taken by him. The commissioners seem to have agreed to these preliminaries, but they opened the conversation by asking whether both parties might not "for a while leave their present strife in abeyance and occupy themselves in some continental question, till their anger should cool and accommodation become possible."[1] This, of course, referred to Mexico, although the commissioners had previously agreed that they would not commit themselves to the project. Lincoln responded that he supposed they referred to something Mr. Blair had said; he himself, however, had taken pains not to hear what the latter's idea might be, and had nothing to say except on the bases already mentioned. On those grounds he told the commissioners what he himself felt able to do and what he would like to see done toward reconstruction, outlining a course more advantageous to the South than that which was afterward taken. Seward appears to have said little in the discussion. He brought to the notice of the commissioners the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, which was at the time being submitted to the states with the prospect

[1] Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, Vol. X, p. 19. The whole of the above is summarized from their account.

of being ratified by a sufficient number to become valid. He thought to himself how different were the circumstances from those of the negotiations in which he had taken part nearly four years before.[1] As to Mexico, he had his own ideas, which were very different from those of Mr. Blair.

"Our foreign relations are closing up finely," wrote Seward to his wife in the same letter that mentioned the Hampton Roads Conference. This was certainly the case: the foreign relations of the country in the last half of the war were no longer the difficult and anxious matter they had been for the previous years. Neither England nor France withdrew her recognition of belligerency in spite of the continual suggestion of Seward, but the danger of any joint action, or even of individual action looking to complete recognition or mediation or intervention, had ceased with the summer of 1863. The Confederate cruisers still used foreign ports in a manner most harmful to the United States, but the danger of Confederate building or equipping of ships of war in those ports had practically ceased when the Laird rams were stopped. Seward and Adams and Dayton might well congratulate themselves upon their success in these directions. There was still a great volume of diplomatic business with those countries and with the rest of Europe as well, but there were no acute crises. Blockade-runners continued to be active;

[1] He spoke of the contrast in writing to his wife, *Life*. Vol. III. p. 261, and it may have suggested the beginning of his despatch to Adams of Feb. 7th, *Dip. Corr.*, 1865, p. 184.

the ideas that cotton was king or that the blockade would be broken, however, proved to be without foundation. Toward the end of the war France had become so involved in the trouble with Mexico that she was no longer a dangerous factor in the situation, while the gradual change in public opinion in England had in a very different way a similar effect. In April, 1861, Seward had questioned the intentions of Russia, but that power had been a steady friend, and the visit of her fleet in the winter of 1863 had had an excellent effect not only in a public way, but upon Seward's policy, for he understood clearly that the visit of the fleet stood for Russian aid in case of war.[1] Throughout the year 1864 Seward must have felt that he had the situation in hand: his policy had been successful. He had not done everything he had desired, but he had done much. In spite of a bad beginning, he had averted the most dangerous possibilities and had kept in check the most dangerous enemies. With the help of his able ministers and a few earnest friends abroad, he had prevented foreign intervention, in spite of the active sympathy with the South of the Emperor of the French and the leaders of the Palmerston ministry, and the constant effort on the part of the South to bring these governments to a point where they would be most useful to the rebellion. In the winter of 1865 he had certainly a right to feel that the logic of events indicated a favorable conclusion.

[1] Such is the statement of Mr. F. W. Seward, then assistant secretary.

The final campaign began with success and it was clear that Richmond would shortly be taken. The President was inaugurated and it appeared that he would be able to devote his second administration to restoring peaceful relations. On the 5th of April Seward, as usual, went for a drive in the afternoon. He had a pair of spirited horses, such as he always liked, which took fright and ran away. In trying to leap from the carriage, Seward was seriously injured, his shoulder being dislocated and his jaw broken. This accident was but the precursor of a more terrible event. When the President returned from Richmond, he came to his disabled friend and sitting on the side of the bed, told him of the experience which both had looked forward to for so long. It was the last time that the two met. On April 14th the President was shot at Ford's Theatre, and on the same evening Seward was nearly murdered in his bed.[1]

For several days he lay only partly conscious or in a stupor. On the day of Lincoln's funeral, a colleague noted in his diary: "Seward, I am told, sat up in his bed and viewed the procession and hearse of the President, and I know his emotion."

Of all the many thousands killed and wounded in that war, no two make a stranger picture than the Secretary, maimed and muffled in bandages, raised upon his bed and propped with pillows, looking out

[1] He was severely cut and slashed in the face and throat; his son also was half killed by the assassin, while the nurses and attendants were also severely slashed or stabbed.

from under his shaggy eyebrows at the solemn pomp with which the body of the great President passed away from the place where they had worked together throughout the long struggle now ended.

CHAPTER XX

LAST DAYS

It was a long time before Seward was himself again, but even before he could in any way be called well, he had assumed his accustomed place at the State Department and at the Cabinet meetings. Restlessly desirous as he was to be at work once more, he could not even begin to do anything till after the inauguration of Johnson, the surrender at Appomattox, the disbandment of the armies, the beginning of reconstruction. And when he had to some extent recovered his physical powers, he could by no means have recovered his moral and intellectual poise after the shock caused by the death of Lincoln and by his own injuries. With Lincoln's plans and hopes for restoring the Union after the war should be over, Seward was more or less familiar. But nothing had been settled, nor if it had been, would it be of necessity now possible. He felt that for the moment he could form no policy himself but must merely try to work out old ideas under the new and difficult circumstances that had arisen.

In the midst of these anxieties and perplexities, a new shock came upon him. Mrs. Seward had long been in feeble health;—indeed, had been able to live with her husband at Washington only now and then. The carriage accident had called her from

Auburn, however, so that she had actually been in the house at the time of the attempted assassination. The effect of this succession of painful and horrible events had been too much for her, and after some days of watching and attendance upon her husband and her son, she had fallen into a fever, and now died on June 21st.

It was not till well into July, therefore, that Seward was able really to devote himself once more to his work. By that time Johnson had already made a beginning of his policy of reconstruction. Congress was not in session, and there was opportunity for Johnson to carry out the plans he had in mind without legislative interference. He was a man devotedly loyal to the Union and it was for this reason that he was now President. Of a cruder, coarser type than Lincoln, he was therefore more rigorous, even vindictive, in his ideas of the proper treatment to be accorded to the men and states of the South. Yet in essentials, his policy, except for some personal violences, was not more severe than Lincoln's; —in fact, it was to a great degree a carrying out of the plans that the dead President had already formed. These plans, when Seward learned what they were, were not such as he disagreed with. For four years he had been engaged in declaring to foreign governments that the Union was intact in spite of the insurrection: he was not likely to demand any theory of reconstruction, which assumed that the fundamental bond had been broken and that new means of union were needful. In the main, he approved Johnson's policy. He himself was extremely

busy with foreign affairs which are always heavy after a war, for though the pressure of immediate danger may be over, there remains or reappears a myriad of minor matters that often demand more careful thought and more laborious attention than weightier matters.

Most important of these, though not at this time engaging his attention more than several other subjects, were the claims arising from the destruction caused by the *Alabama* and other Confederate cruisers built in England. In 1863 when the damage done by the *Alabama* had become heavy, Seward had presented the claims of the United States to Lord Russell, who had declared that Great Britain could not consider such matters; that she had maintained a strict neutrality; and that gains or losses resulting from her course must be regarded as the fortune of war. Seward agreed that the time was not very favorable for an impartial opinion of the merits of the case, but he continued to present them if only with a view to having them recorded. After the war Lord Russell suggested a commission for the adjustment of claims on both sides, but Seward declined such an arrangement, for he found that the English minister assumed that there could be no consideration of the question of Great Britain's neutrality. Seward's idea was that Great Britain had been in the wrong from the beginning,—wrong in her early recognition of belligerency and her assumption of the position of a neutral; wrong in the way she had maintained this neutral position. That the United States had suffered so greatly was

tail the political power of the ex-rebel and to take care of the political status of the negro. Seward agreed with the President, partly on the ground of general loyalty, but partly no doubt because he liked Johnson's plan better than that of Congress. He was not afraid of the ex-rebel and he was not especially solicitous about the negro. Hence he remained in Johnson's Cabinet throughout his administration, though the course subjected him to fierce party abuse and even some hard feeling from friends.

But his chief duty was in connection with foreign affairs and here appeared a question of growing importance. Maximilian had now been a year or more in Mexico supported by a French army of thirty thousand men under General Bazaine, and it was obvious that the affair was no longer a French settlement of commercial difficulties as it was at first declared to be, or a Mexican revolution. It was simply a foreign attempt to establish a monarchy in America. One of the early letters that Seward was able to dictate (June 3d) was to John Bigelow, who had become minister to France on the sudden death of Dayton not long before. As the war had drawn to an end, the French government naturally began to consider what would be the position of the United States on the Mexican question. The Union soldiers under arms far outnumbered the French soldiers in Mexico. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs therefore sounded Mr. Bigelow as to the "anticipated hostility" of the United States to the French policy. Seward at this time would not write more

than that the minister was well aware of the policy of the late President; that it would undergo no change.[1] Later he spoke a little more freely and expressed the views of the United States in greater detail. Without claiming any right to insist that Mexico or any other American state should be republican, he did hold that those peoples had a right to their own choice of government. Maximilian's empire was clearly imposed upon the Mexicans, and the United States would in no case associate themselves with any such effort. He further pointed out diplomatically that, since the war was now over, the American people were looking upon this matter as one of great importance, and that there were considerable military forces on the Mexican frontier.[2] He had stated the case very moderately. Not only did people in general look unfavorably upon the empire of Maximilian, but especially in the army, now a very popular body, was there much feeling. At the close of the war Grant had sent Sheridan with 50,000 men to the Rio Grande.

The French minister assured Bigelow that it was the intention of the Emperor to withdraw from Mexico.[3] Bigelow lost no occasion for keeping the matter in his mind: in the course of the fall he inquired whether it was true that Soudanese infantry were being loaned by the Pacha of Egypt. The French minister was not backward in presenting a strong case. The United States, he said, had held

[1] *Life*, Vol. III, p. 289.
[2] *Dip. Corr.*, Sept. 6, 1865, Vol. III, p. 412.
[3] *Ibid.*, Sept. 21, 1865, Vol. III, p. 416.

that France was wrong in recognizing Mr. Davis and his associates, although those gentlemen occupied for a long time a perfectly definite, regular, and settled territory. Now the United States persisted in recognizing Juarez who had no government, no army, no territory, and often himself could not be found. France, however, did not complain of that while the United States remained neutral. As to the feeling of the people of the United States, it had never been pretended that they did not sympathize with a republican form of government in Mexico, but that he certainly supposed that, even under the name of monarchy, they would prefer order and security to brigandage and misrule. There was much on the face of it in the French presentation, but the facts in the case were very clear, and even to gain a quiet government in Mexico the American people were not likely to approve of an empire supported by a foreign army.

This latter idea, however, had never been openly put forward by the French government, even when the United States seemed most occupied with domestic affairs, nor could it be advanced now. The French minister assured Seward that the French troops would be withdrawn, but the Emperor sent word that it would be inconvenient to do so until the United States should recognize the imperial government as a *de facto* political power. On December 16th Seward returned an answer, reiterating the view of the United States, and closing with profound regret that the French government saw fit to leave the subject in a condition that did not au-

thorize an expectation of a satisfactory adjustment.

This suggestive answer led M. Druyn de l'Huys to confer with the Emperor, as a result of which a careful statement of the French position was sent to the French minister at Washington and handed to Seward.[1] It rehearsed the conditions: the just war of France in support of its just claims;[2] the desire on the part of the Mexican people for a monarchy instead of the constant anarchy of the immediate past; the establishment of a regular government under a prince elected by the Mexican people. It was hoped that the United States would maintain strict neutrality: when assurance to that effect was received, the French would be able to indicate the results of their negotiations with Maximilian as to the withdrawal of troops. With this despatch it became evident that the corner was turned. Seward saw there was no more mention of recognition. He replied that he could not agree with the Emperor in his view of the circumstances; that the American people, without questioning the objects or intentions of France, regarded the establishment of a Mexican empire as contrary to the will and opinions of the Mexican people and without their authority; hence it could recognize only the old republic. He therefore gave reassurance of the desire of the Federal government to facilitate the removal of French troops from Mexico.

[1] *Dip. Corr.*, 1865, Vol. III, p. 805.

[2] Claims not less just, it was pointedly remarked, than those of the United States twenty years before.

Polite language this was, but the meaning was plain. On April 5, 1866, it was officially announced in Paris that the French army would be gradually withdrawn; by March, 1867, it had practically gone. Maximilian could not bring himself to abandon those who had put their trust in his fortunes. There followed a melancholy confirmation of Seward's position: that the empire was but a foreign usurpation and contrary to the will of the Mexican people. The government of Maximilian crumbled away on the departure of the troops. In three months' time he had been driven from his capital, followed up, besieged and captured. Seward made every effort to save his life, but without success. On June 19, 1867, he was executed. The government of Juarez was reëstablished and the inglorious episode of French invasion was ended.

With the settlement of these disputes, which were legacies of the war, and with the passing away from national life of the burning question of slavery, even though the problems of reconstruction pressed hard upon the nation, Seward's mind turned, like a spring released from a weight, to the thoughts and ideas of earlier days, to the questions of transportation and internal development, which had then seemed all important and which had reluctantly been put aside by the imperious preëminence of slavery. The building of canals and then of railroads had been the popular projects of his earlier years. The building of railroads and telegraphs was the one great interest in this decade after the

war had ended. The trans-Atlantic cable was finally completed, after many discouragements, in 1866: even before the war Seward had found time to push the interests of this enterprise in a Senate where slavery was the absorbing topic. The Pacific Railroad was even more a matter to his mind. He had been among the first to recognize its importance. Even in 1849 in the very beginning of the gold excitement in California, his habitual interest in internal improvement had led him to feel, without careful study or much knowledge of the matter, that a trans-continental line was one of the great necessities of the republic. As Washington saw the importance of communication over the slight divide at Oriskany, so Seward perceived that the Great Divide must be crossed by some national road. Soon, however, as we have seen, California aroused more exciting questions than those of internal improvement. The Pacific Railroad itself speedily became mingled in the general chaos. Seward, could he have ranged himself among its promoters, would have found himself in strange company, with Benton and Frémont on one side, and Achison and Douglas on the other. The pro-slavery element in Missouri, which demanded the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, demanded also a Pacific railroad.[1] So during the decade before the war, the real friends of the measure could never quite unite. But now the question of slavery was out of the way and the only problems were those of

[1] See Way, *Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, passim.*

finance and construction. With these Seward did not attempt to deal: he was satisfied to see the work well under way, aided by the resources of the nation and in the hands of those competent to carry it through.

His views, as they turned toward consolidation of the republic, had, even in earlier days, looked out beyond the western coast-line of the United States. Seward was one of the first of our statesmen to appreciate the importance of the Pacific. Had he developed his own ideas as he chose, the years between 1850 and 1860 would have seen him not merely the advocate of an Atlantic cable and a trans-continental railroad, but also of a Pacific steamship line, of the annexation of Hawaii, and of the opening of Japan and China. Seward was an imperialist before imperialism. As he looked out in imagination at Buffalo and saw the unbounded wilderness and prairie civilizing and realizing itself and sending its stores of commerce and agriculture to the Atlantic seaboard by the Erie Canal, so in imagination he had early looked out upon the Pacific and beheld it, if not an American lake, at least a means to the discovery of a new world. Here, as before, the twenty years of anti-slavery and war had made a sad break. The Oregon question had been settled so that Great Britain retained its footing at Vancouver; the subsidies to the Collins Line had not proved the true way of establishing trans-Pacific communication; the great carrying-trade of the United States had nearly disappeared under the attacks of the *Alabama* and the *Shenandoah*. These things could hardly be

undone. There was, however, a possibility in the way of compensation. In 1844 the campaign discussion of the Oregon line had pushed it up as far as the southern boundary of Russian America, and at that time it had been suggested that Russia might dispose of her American territory to the United States.[1] Seward believed in extension to the northwest, not by war but by purchase.[2] The idea had been suggested later by various persons, officially and unofficially. In 1854 the New York *Tribune* published an article from its correspondent at Paris, in which it stated that a special messenger was being despatched by the Czar with a proposition to cede Sitka to the United States, and said editorially that the proposition was natural. This report proved unfounded. In 1859, however, an informal proposition was made by Buchanan, through Senator Gwin.[3] Seward himself had prophesied, in 1860, that one day the outposts of the Russian country, even up to the Arctic circle, would be the outposts of his own. Now the idea suddenly assumed tangible form. Russia had been the consistent friend of the United States throughout the war. She had constantly refused to join in offers of mediation.

[1] *Life*, Vol. III, p. 346.

[2] See his letter declining the Chautauqua nomination to the Constitutional Convention in 1846, *Life*, Vol. II, p. 791. "But our population is destined to roll its resistless waves to the icy barriers of the North, and to encounter Oriental civilization on the shores of the Pacific. The monarchs of Europe are to have no rest while they have a colony remaining on this continent. France has already sold out. Spain has sold out. We shall see how long before England inclines to follow their example." I do not find any reference of his to Russian America at this period.

[3] Sumner, *Speeches*, Vol. XI, p. 203.

She had even sent her fleet to America as a mark of sympathy. Seward now in 1867 opened an inquiry through the Russian minister as to whether his government would incline to part with her American possessions. The transfer appeared advantageous to both parties. Russia seemed to have slight need of Russian America. In time of war, it might be a difficulty; in time of peace, it was of small value to the government, being turned over for management to a chartered company. Negotiations between the capitals were in progress for some months; but the actual drawing up of the treaty was accomplished with singular rapidity. The Russian minister called at Seward's house one evening to say that he had received the consent of the Czar to the transfer, and that if it were agreeable, they might begin upon the treaty the next day. Seward was still more active: "Why not to-night?" he asked. By gathering clerks and secretaries at once, the treaty was ready by the next morning, and was immediately brought before the Senate, where it was advocated by Charles Sumner, who had been advised of these rapid proceedings. This was at the end of March: the treaty was ratified by the Senate on April 8th. It still remained to gain from the House of Representatives the necessary appropriation for the purchase money, which was $7,200,000, but the treaty was proclaimed, and even the cession made in the summer before the House acted. The name Alaska was chosen by Seward.

With the close of Johnson's administration, Sew-

ard's long political career came to an end. It had lasted for almost half a century; indeed, could we take his youthful address of welcome to Governor Tompkins as a beginning, it would be just half a century. Such exactnesses are of course unnecessary: more important is it that Seward had been in public life during the rise, the flourishing, the fall, of the slavery question in national politics. When he entered the arena a few years after the Missouri Compromise, little was said or thought by public men on the subject; there were still slaves in New York as in South Carolina. When he finally left public office, slavery had gone. He had seen this great struggle from beginning to end, one might almost say, and had been an important actor in it. Just the part that he played has been made clear, and that he looked upon the question as an episode in the progress of the American nation is also clear. In departing from office, he doubtless felt that the future of the country might be left to other hands.

He lived only a few years longer, but those years were most characteristically spent. Three months after he laid down the duties of Secretary of State, he started by the just completed Union Pacific Railroad on a journey across the continent to that great western dominion which had so much interested him. He not only studied the Pacific slope, but made a tour into Alaska to see the territory that he had added to the United States, and also visited Mexico. After a journey of nine months, he returned to Auburn, but he did not stay there long: his transcontinental trip was merely the prelude to a tour

around the world. He started in August, 1870, and was absent for a year and two months. The journey was a most enjoyable one, for everywhere in addition to the interest of the country itself, Seward had the pleasure of meeting statesmen with whom he had been dealing in the long term of his secretaryship. In Europe he had many profitable interviews with public men, but was too late for the second Empire and too early for the Geneva Court of Arbitration.

He returned to Auburn but not to a desolate old age. Almost immediately he set about describing the men and scenes he had known: with the aid of an adopted daughter, he wrote the story of his journey around the world, and began an autobiography. It would have been singularly interesting had he been able to complete the latter work, but though he began it first, he laid it aside in order to finish the account of his travels. He was working on his notes on the very day of his death, October 10, 1872.

One can often do much for the understanding of a great man by a formula or a judgment, but it is better to see and understand his whole life and action. Seward began his career almost on the frontier: with an interest in the people about him and a feeling of civic responsibility, he went into politics as a follower of Adams and Clinton on the issue of internal improvements. But at the same time, it will be remembered, he took a definite stand in favor of the extension of the privilege of election

and against machine politics. This latter position was the more important of the two because it fixed his place as an anti-Regency man for the next ten, not to say twenty, years. Ten years later, Seward and his political friends joined the opponents of Jackson in other states in the Whig party. The Whigs stood for the United States Bank, the tariff, and internal improvements, but the last two issues were hardly party matters in New York State and the chief ground for division was at first the bank. Seward favored it chiefly because he opposed the political effects of the state bank system, as he saw it manipulated by the Regency. And even while a Whig he went far toward estranging himself from his party by taking the side of the immigrant, because he saw that an educated workman was the great need of the country as a whole. Then came the anti-slavery question. As a public man, Seward opposed slavery because he believed that the national welfare depended on free labor. On this issue he was willing to stand alone, or even to split and break up his party when it would not follow him.

When he finally found himself one of the leaders of a great and victorious political organization, he was compelled to work to preserve the existence of the nation, rather than to increase its prosperity. But even here he made such mistakes as he did chiefly through a too great confidence in the power of the feeling of nationality which had so strongly influenced himself. He never believed in secession until it came, because he overrated the Union senti-

ment in the South; he thought of a foreign war through just the same error; when the Civil War was begun, he was always thinking it was reaching its end for much the same reason. When it came to reconstruction, he took the unpopular side because he still felt that the Union had never been dissolved. After the war, as we have just seen, he gathered himself together with unwearied energy for work in the direction that had always seemed to him the right one, and took steps toward ground on which the country, after thirty years, was proud to come up to him.

As a politician and as a statesman he had many faults which made him many enemies, and he made mistakes which still reduce his friends to wonder. But his failures and his mistakes were never of more than temporary effect and never put him off the line of a consistent and a splendid career. Of all the statesmen of his day, there is no one whose politics and principles lead more directly to our own. As one follows his life, one is constantly thinking how modern he is. If he could come back to his beloved country a hundred years after the days when he took his first steps in politics, he would find himself quite in touch with the present dominant motives of public life:—The placing of politics in the hands of the people and the preservation and development by the state of all its possibilities and resources.

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THE chief foundation for any life of Seward will be his autobiography, his letters, and his speeches. The speeches have been published in five volumes. The autobiography and letters have been edited by Frederick W. Seward in his *Life* of his father, and have been used in the lives by Bancroft and Lothrop. I have supplemented their work by some manuscript authorities, by the official records, by newspapers, and by memoirs and letters, beside the usual histories of New York State and the United States.

The first manuscript authority is the great collection of letters to and from Seward. As this voluminous material has already been carefully examined by my predecessors, I have felt that it would be more useful to spend my time on other collections, of which the chief are:

1. The Van Buren Manuscripts in the Congressional Library, consisting of letters to Van Buren, and affording one of the most valuable authorities for the first years of Seward's political life.

2. The Hollister Manuscripts, consisting of letters to Thurlow Weed, chiefly from Seward, but also from many other public men. It is especially valuable for the years 1825–1850.

3. The Schuyler Manuscripts, consisting of a number of letters from Seward to Mrs. George Schuyler. The letters are not numerous but throw very valuable light upon his political ideas.

There is also to be noted under this head a manuscript memoir of Elijah Miller, now in the collection of the Cayuga County Historical Association.

The principal official authorities are the *Journals* of the Senate of New York State for the period of Seward's service in that body, the *Congressional Globe* for the years that he served in the Senate of the United States, and the *Diplomatic Correspondence* for the years during which he was Secretary of State. The first of these authorities gives very little, but may be reinforced by the reports of legislative proceedings to be found in the daily papers and also

by Hammond's *Political History of the State of New York*, of which the second volume is almost an original authority.

The value of the newspapers, at least for the earlier political life of Seward, is very great. There are very few letters before 1830, and although that period is covered by an *Autobiography* written in the last year of Seward's life, yet much more is needed for a satisfactory understanding of events. The newspapers give us a knowledge of minor political proceedings that is often of importance. They give details of caucuses and conventions, resolutions and addresses, delegates and officers, and other matters that are quite as important as the political opinion and gossip which they also present. The chief newspapers of value here are:

1. *Cayuga Republican.* This was at first Clintonian and then Anti-Masonic, and therefore gives us the best view of Seward's earlier activity.

2. *Cayuga Patriot.* This was the regular Republican paper: I have unfortunately been able to read only an incomplete file for the years before Seward went to Albany.

3. *Albany Advertiser*, first Clintonian and then National Republican. I have been able to read the complete file from the beginning of Seward's political activity to the establishment of the *Evening Journal.*

4. *Albany Evening Journal*, first Anti-Masonic and then Whig. This paper, edited by Thurlow Weed, may be taken as presenting pretty nearly Seward's own view of matters. The complete file is hard to get at, but I have read a good deal between the years 1830 and 1842.

5. *Albany Argus.* The regular Republican paper. Extremely well edited by Edwin Croswell, this paper is, next to the *Evening Journal*, the most valuable comment on Seward's earlier public life.

With the passing of Seward from state to national politics, the newspaper field widens so immensely that it is practically impossible to cover it. I have read chiefly

6. *New York Tribune*, 1848–1860. Besides the immense general influence of this paper, the fact that it was edited by Horace Greeley, who for a long time was closely connected in politics with Seward and Weed, gives it for our purpose a very particular character.

7. *London Times*, 1860–1865, should always be consulted for any especial incident, as that of the *Trent* or Gladstone's Newcastle speech.

Besides the above, of course, many other papers would be useful. There are, for instance, a considerable number of Anti-Masonic papers during the years 1827–1832, which often have good material, while the New York City dailies before the *Tribune* always have something of interest even about up-state politics.

There is a great number of memoirs, autobiographies, etc., which will often yield matter of importance. Of these I have found the most useful to be the *Autobiography* of Thurlow Weed, with the *Life* by T. W. Barnes; the letters from DeWitt Clinton to Henry Post, published in *Harper's Monthly*, Vol. 50, pp. 409, 563; the *Diary* of Philip Hone; the *Reminiscences* of Levi Beardsley; *Random Recollections* by H. B. Stanton; *Recollections of a Busy Life* by Horace Greeley; *Reminiscences* of Carl Schurz; the *Life and Letters* of Charles Sumner; the *Diary* of Gideon Welles, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for 1909; the *Reminiscences* of John Bigelow; the *Life of J. T. Delane* by W. T. Dasent; the *Life of Gladstone* by Lord Morley. Here, too, should be mentioned several valuable papers in the Collections of the Cayuga Historical Society.

I have not studied the pamphlet literature which is presumably voluminous. There are some thirty or forty Anti-Masonic tracts alone, which I have read with little profit, and there are doubtless many more relating to the later years of Seward's life.

The student will be able to fill out easily the list of secondary authorities, but I should like to specify two monographs of value. One is Way's *Repeal of the Missouri Compromise*, a book that did much to make clearer to me the confused state of public life at the time of the Kansas-Nebraska struggles. The other is Callahan's *Evolution of Seward's Mexican Policy*, a book which I did not read until I had finished my account of the subject. Professor Callahan presents a view very different from that in the text, and I should have doubtless been influenced by his treatment had I been aware of it earlier, though I believe I should not have varied much from my present ideas.

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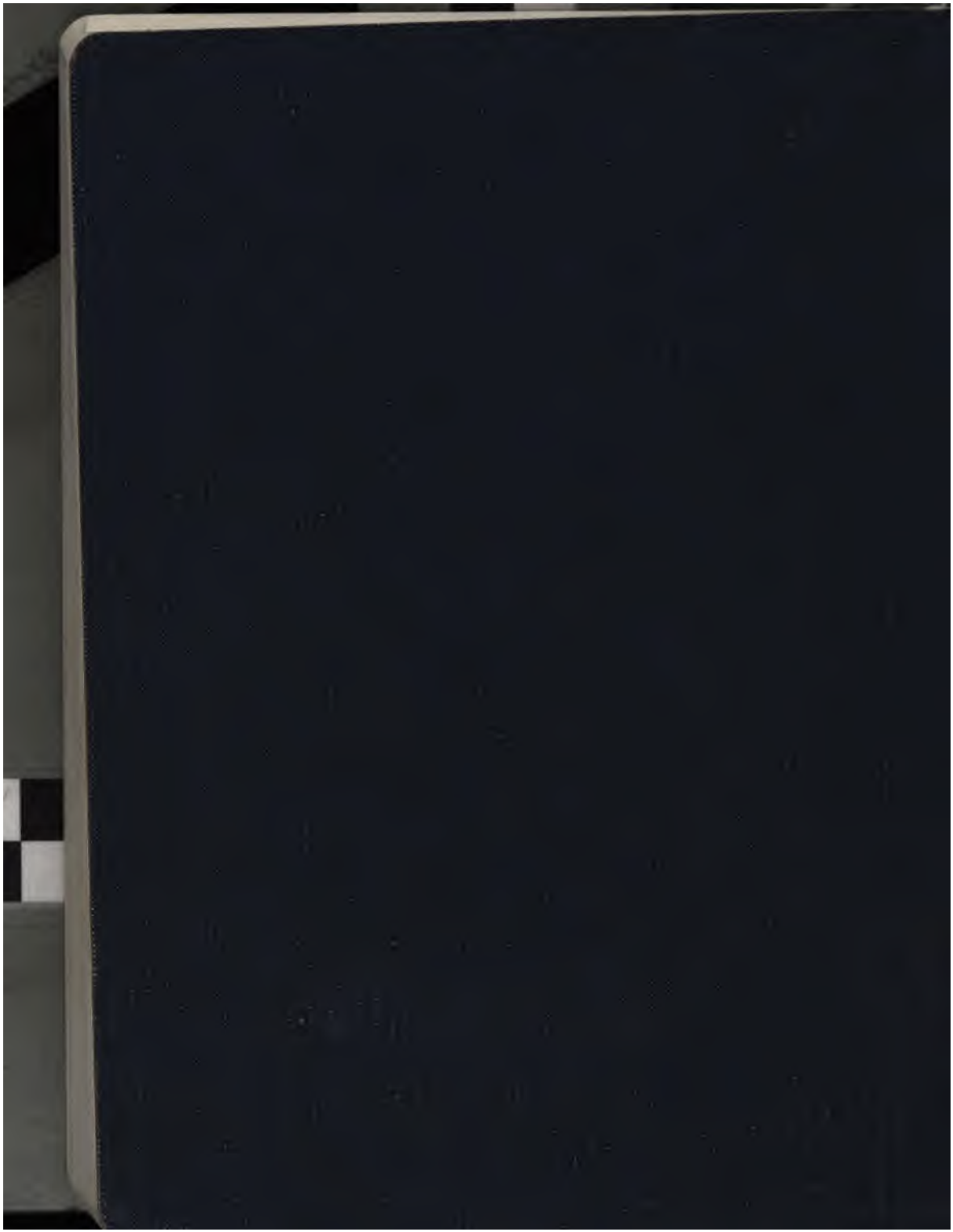
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